MAGIC COACH 200

The Very Best of MagicCoach Volume 2

Timothy Hyde

MagicCoach.com

MagicCoach 200

The Best of MagicCoach Volume 2

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Written by

Timothy Hyde

eBook layout design by

Lynda Hyde

PO Box 19

Hazelbrook NSW 2779

Australia

Phone 61 2 47588961

Email timothy@timothyhyde.com

Web http://www.magiccoach.com

Welcome to MagicCoach 200

For those who came in late here's a quick background to the MagicCoach Project. In mid 1999 we started producing a weekly emailed Magic Marketing newsletter called MagicCoach. It grew from a small weekly Australian Magic News eZine that I had been publishing for some time, where I had started to share a few marketing ideas.

While there were a few other electronic Magic newsletters around at this time and a few people publishing some material this way about Magic Marketing, I believe we were the first regular weekly offering.

We missed quite a few weeks when I was away on tour or out at sea performing on cruise ships, but after 2 and a half years we hit the milestone of 100 issues.

We then compiled those ideas, articles, tips and advice into our first eBook, MagicCoach100. This has been a bestseller for us off our own site and continues to be one of the top sellers in its category at Lybrary.com.

Our publication schedule slowed quite a bit for the next few years as our corporate performing schedule took priority and we also concentrated on expanding our eBook series of both Magic Marketing and Performance Material, growing our thriving YouTube & Face Book channels and publishing an online training course. But over the last 5 years I've been consistently writing and publishing MagicCoach again, both through our own Newsletter and via the online magic magazine Vanish, in our ongoing Ten Little Secrets series. The articles there are now read by over 100,000 magicians around the world each month.

This compilation, MagicCoach 200, is gathered from the last 5 years from both the online Vanish articles and material shared on our blog. We've expanded many of the original Vanish pieces with many more examples, case studies and insights.

A lot has changed since the first compilation! It's fascinating to compare the two books in light of this.

Internet Marketing in its myriad forms, Social Media Networking, Adwords, Periscope, Facebook Live, YouTube & LinkedIn to name but a few.

The market for magic has also changed, some for the better, some for the worse. Some areas that were considered solid regular earners, like corporate entertainment for instance have changed. The demand in some cities is now quite weak, with only a handful of acts still pulling in the consistently high fees.

Cruise Lines are another example. While the industry is booming and there are more opportunities, they are in general now paying less than they were 10 – 20 years ago. In fact there are so many magicians looking for work at sea, some premium lines are now able to secure strong acts willing to work on a “contra deal” arrangement.

Also the way that we learn Magic has changed. Many would say for the worse. The Bricks and Mortar local shop with its experienced professional sharing tips, knowledge and advice, is all but gone, with the exception of a few notable examples.

We don’t get together face to face at Magic Clubs as much either, to share our secrets, our history or our ethics. On the flip side, conventions like Magic Live and Genii Convention are still selling out as are other smaller niche events. The downloadable lecture, DVD or YouTube exposure clip is the source of much information, as is the eBook, like this one. MagicCoach Newsletter has never been a physical publication, unless you took the time to print them out, something that collectors, cataloguers & magic historians are still struggling with.

We've also had a significant boom in the popularity of Mentalism since the first book. Once a rather small specific niche within the Mystery Arts it’s now flavour of the year, with every second magician proclaiming himself Magician & Mentalist, further blurring the actual concept in the minds of the market and the purists.

Thankfully the bread and butter work of many working professionals – schools, pre-schools, festivals, private parties, roving magic, weddings, scout events etc, has stayed pretty strong, but of course the methods of marketing to them has evolved. Some of the strategies and things we talked about in the last compilation, probably don't cut it anymore. Others are just as valid or the principles can be applied to the new tools and opportunities out there. And, luckily for us, all magic is going through another Golden Age with the public!

We have had a boom in the popularity of big touring shows, spearheaded by the mighty The Illusionists franchise. Magicians are also being prominently featured in TV Talent Shows, in fact being headhunted and cajoled into appearing. And where once they were never expected to win, just to provide colour and movement while a singer got the recording contract, magicians are now sometimes taking the top slots.

It’s an exciting time!

I know this compilation builds on the material contained in the first and hope once again will help you pursue your dreams in the industry, whatever they may be.

Timothy Hyde

December 2016

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SECTION 4 Resources

Quick Start Guide

This Book is NOT a Course.

You don't need to read it in order, so please dip in and out however you like.

The Book is also NOT a complete guide to Magic Marketing or a complete Magic Career Guide-Book. I share the things that work for me, that I have experience in or that I've asked other experts about. I hope that many of these things will also work for you.

There are plenty of other avenues, channels, approaches and tools out there. Just because they are not included here doesn't mean they are not excellent and useful. It just means I don't have great experience using them. It would have been easy enough to whip up some extra articles to pad out the book, but we have chosen not to do so.

The Contents section will take you to the various sections and then list the articles within each section.

However, Don't Read All the Book at Once!

Many of the articles, especially in the first Section, have action steps that you can take or at least think about. Some have links through to other resources that you can research and explore.

If you rush through you will probably never return and do them properly.

Ideally you could read one article each day, follow the actions or at least have a think about how it relates to you and your business. If you follow this procedure the book will keep you busy for months!

I know some of the ideas are contrarian or controversial, they were included for a purpose. If you disagree that's fine. What I'm trying to get you to do here, is to get you to THINK.

Even if you decide a particular idea or concept doesn't apply to you, at least you have taken a few moments to come to that decision, reinforcing or confirming your awareness of your career progress, choices and the options available to you.

Some people will find it helps to keep a Journal or NoteBook. Jot down your thoughts as you go and importantly the Actions you have decided to take.

If you do commit to doing anything, make it a concrete statement - What, Why & By When!

To further strengthen your decision – take a moment to list also the Challenges or Obstacles that you perceive might prevent you from completing that particular task. Pinpointing those things is a major step towards overcoming them.

Remember, implementing just one of the hundred of Tips and Ideas contained in this collection will easily repay your small investment.

SECTION 1 A Magic Career

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These ideas were some of the most commented on and liked when they first appeared in Vanish and on the blog.

Some big picture concepts on driving your magic business forward and keeping the momentum going, plus some nitty gritty tools and techniques.

Stop "Being Busy"

Being a full time professional entertainer is an awesome career but it comes with a huge amount of tasks to be done.

We wear many hats – writer, marketer, publicist, bookkeeper, designer, logistics expert, props builder, driver, set designer and of course... performer.

We can all be busy doing "stuff," filling up our days and feeling pleased with ourselves at the close of business, but are you actually working on the right things?

Being busy is sometimes just a way to avoid doing the tasks that might really propel you and your business forwards.

An old mentor of mine would always drum that into me at our monthly catch-up's.
“Timothy, are you working on the right things?”

Action

Be clear on what your actually goals are and the actionable steps that will progress you towards them.

Check out the Resource section at the end of the book, in particular ‘The 12 Week Year’ & ‘Zen to Done.’

Also check out the fabulous ‘Impact Ease Grid’ to help you prioritize projects.

Learn to Outsource

As much as you think you can, you can't do everything. And even if you could, is it a good use of your time?

As independent entertainment professional we are used to wearing many hats. As mentioned above, we write, design, direct, do the accounting, publicity, administration. And then of course perform.

But this "we can do everything" attitude can be a trap.

The internet has made outsourcing easy.

Web sites like - Fiverr.com, Guru.com & Elance.com provide a vast array of cheap priced talent for hire for Design work, Voice Over's, Banners, Business Cards & Virtual Assistants.

Check out the resource pages for some of my recommended sites

And before you say, "everything I've seen from Fiverr is Rubbish" consider this. If you are working on a new publicity piece, image etc, buy a bunch of $5 ideas and see who comes up with best. Spending $50 to get 10 completely different ideas and approaches to your challenge may be a great way to "brainstorm." Then take the concept and expand on it.

Actions

If you've never outsourced before, try a simple project at Fiverr.com just to test the water.

Make a list of the things that you really don't like doing in your business.
Is it the bookkeeping? Stuffing Envelopes for Mailouts? Assembling Party Packs, Invoicing? Cold Calling? Poster Design?

These amongst many others are possible candidates for outsourcing.

Give Stuff Up 1

It's just as important when setting your goals, to decide on what you are "not" going to do as it is in deciding what you "are" going to do.
We often set goals like - exercise more, practice more, call more people, write more etc. But it is often more effective to eliminate tasks, habits, people and practices, freeing up your time and energy to focus on the important things, this also applies to clients and jobs!

Michael Port In his brilliant work "Book Yourself Solid" talks about this as The Velvet Rope principle.

Eliminate the bookings that don't fill you with excitement!

This can be quite tough, to actually turn down work, but I can assure you in the long run it will really pay off. It will allow you to focus on the work that excites you.

The sooner you discover your passion, it will show both onstage and off. Your enthusiasm will shine through, it will get you leaping out of bed in the mornings to do some more, and keep you going through quiet periods that we all have.

Actions.

List the types of shows you would prefer not to do.

Is it the venues or audience type? Why?

Are there Bookers or Agencies you would prefer not to work with? Why?

Look at your current bookings! Are there any that should not have got past the Velvet Rope?

Make a list of ideal Shows you do like to do.

What makes them so special? Venue? Audience type?

Who are these people? How did you get booked by them?

Do a SWOT on yourself

Most people do a SWOT on their business and it certainly is a very powerful diagnostic and planning tool.

If you don't know the technique a quick browse on the internet will show you how to do it. The tool is often used in strategic planning sessions.

SWOT = Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats.

I suggest you also run a SWOT on yourself.

Really pinpoint what you are good at and what you are not.

I was reminded of this recently in an article about the famous Australian chef Neil Perry. He was already a successful man, running a couple of top rated restaurants, but after running the SWOT on himself rather than just his business, he saw by exploiting HIS own strengths he could be doing so much more. He then rapidly expanded into many other different but related markets and niches.

Action

Investigate the SWOT technique.

Do a session, better still do it with your Accountability Buddy or Mastermind Group

Give Stuff Up 2..

Don't be afraid to stop performing something even if its works really well!

This strategy caused a bit of a controversy when I first brought it up on an internet forum.

When looking at and planning our acts, we usually drop out and replace the weakest routines first.

A contrarian view is to replace the stronger ones.

I learnt this approach from one of my favourite professional speakers Joe Calloway. Joe famously challenged the entire National Speakers Association annual conference to give up their tried and true keynotes and even topics, to develop completely new ones.

It caused quite a stir, but many took up the challenge.

The concept works because we have changed. The markets have also changed. Our skills have developed, our characters are stronger, our techniques are better. The routine that we developed 5, 10, 20 years before is still excellent but there's often something better to discover that will help your act and career grow.

For years I closed my stand-up show with some fire eating. Apart from the obvious health and safety issues it was very hard to give up, as it was such a strong closer, but I did and my act grew.

A decade later when I was doing an illusion show, we would always close our shows with the same strong routine, but then again found something better.

I now close my shows with a poem...

Action

Are you up to taking on this challenge?

Charge More

Most magicians don't charge what they are worth or charge what they could.

It's the truth!

We feel the market won't accept the price.

We worry that someone will always undercut us.

We feel not worthy of the fee. The "Imposter Syndrome"

Actions

A great exercise to do is this....

With your Accountability Buddy or your Mastermind Group answer this Question

"How much do you charge?”

But Give your Answer quoting 5 or 10 times your usual Fee!

E.g. If you normally charge $1000 you would say....

"For a show like this ..$5000

You’ll laugh the first few times you do it, I guarantee. But it can help you get over a negative mind set.

Now I’m not advising that you immediately 10 X your fee.

But seriously, are there people in your market who charge much more than you?

Are they that much better than you? Do they market better? Are they older? Younger? Have better props, a better agent, nicer suits?

What reasons did you give for the fact that others charge more than you?

Is that an assumption and can it be challenged?

What excuse do you make about the level of fee you charge?

Is it a valid excuse?

Could that be an assumption and could it be challenged?

Think Bigger

One of the best moves I made about 20 years ago was to stop thinking of myself as just a Sydney Magician, the city where I am based.

As soon as I did, I started getting work all around the country.

I still get more work in Queensland and Victoria than I do in my home state of New South Wales.

Try to eliminate the "they'll never pay for the travel or the accommodation costs" thinking! They will.

Alternatively, charge the same fee anywhere around the country! Now this is a bit of a controversial approach. But many professional speakers and entertainers do this, the ones who take the independent approach and don't work through the "bureau/agent system."

Charge more for your show as we discussed in the last lesson and pay your own costs when you travel. Use frequent flyer points etc. It will work out better in the long run and you will have much more flexibility.

You will make more when you work near home and this will balance up the times when you travel, but you will also get exposed to new markets and contacts.

You can also adjust your level of flights, transfers and accommodation to suit your mood and cash flow. I fly interstate to Melbourne or Brisbane probably 10 times a year. Sometimes I'll go down business class, get a taxi transfer and stay at the Hilton, other times it's back of the plane, shuttle bus and self catered budget accommodation

But there's more to the Think Bigger story.

Sometime ago I was performing on a SilverSea cruise ship and having dinner with Graham Burke, CEO of Village RoadShow, the executive producer of such movies as Happy Feet 1 & 2 and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

His is a real rags to riches story and probably worthy of a movie itself. During dinner, another person, on finding out what I did, asked where I worked.

I replied "at corporate events all around Australia" and felt rather pleased about "thinking big."

Sometime later, at an appropriate moment, Graham leant across and whispered "always tell them you work all over the world." I now do.

Hang out with Positive People

Don't spend time or energy on people who suck the life and energy out of you.

If your time on Internet Forums, at Magic Clubs or Social Activities is not filling you with excitement and energy why continue?

Find people who inspire, invigorate and challenge you and spend more time with them.

It was recently put to me like this. Find the cleverest person in the room and hang out with them. And if you ever find that you are the cleverest person in the room, change rooms.

Actions

If you use Facebook, start to un-follow the people that annoy you, depress you or the ones you have no idea who they are.

You can still be friends, but their posts will no longer show up in your feed.

And if you spend time on Internet Magic Forums and it does the same thing, why bother?

Become interesting

People like to do business with interesting people. Become interesting! And I don't just mean the fact that you do some amazing magic. What else do you do?

Be yourself

"Be yourself , everyone else is taken" Oscar Wilde

Momentum

"Mr Booking Agent, please have mercy ...Don't book the jobs so far apart"
Van Morrison

I recently received a fairly despondent email from a younger magician. Well, younger than me but that's not hard. He was somewhat disillusioned with how his career was going. Despite being a full timer for some time and with what he thought was a fairy commercial "act," he felt he wasn't getting any traction and was seeking some ideas.

Though I've never met the guy, I've heard good things about him and his show, so I sent him the previous article and these additional notes.

It's always going to be harder than you imagined

Being a full time professional, supporting yourself, let alone a partner and family, is very hard work. Hobbyists and even part timers, who work at a professional level, don't or more importantly can't understand that. They have no real perception of everything that's involved.

Some years ago a magic writer who I quite enjoyed, wrote on a magic forum, that he felt full time magicians should be the very best at their craft, because "they have all day to practice." In that blinding flash of ignorance, I realized he had absolutely no idea what he was talking about and I've since taken everything else he wrote with a grain of salt.

It is going to be hard. You will have many ups and downs, many "dark nights of the soul."

It's not just you, we all go through it.

Don't worry too much what others are doing

Especially on Social Media. The frequent posting of "my office tonight" photos on Facebook, reports of "standing ovations" and exciting airline journeys can be somewhat depressing if you measure your "success" against others. While it can be a good tactic to model your business on that of others, most posts that you see tend to be people seeking their own self validation.

Play your own game. Letting others influence your confidence and mood is a poor concept.

Be truthful in your advertising and promotional material

While a certain amount of hyperbole is accepted in magicians advertising, deception is not.

There are several magicians in my market area who have never recovered their reputations from the false advertising they conducted in the past. Excuses like "oh everyone does it" or "everyone was doing it then" don't really cut it.

If you want support, referrals and to associate with other professionals in your market, don't try for an unfair advantage.

And it's not just your colleagues who notice this. I was working with a Cruise Director for the first time. He looked at my introduction and then at me and said "Timothy, every other magician who's ever worked on this ship has always claimed to be ‘Australia's Number 1 Magician” but not you”.... and he laughed.

Doing roving magic at a company picnic is not working corporate.

Get over that in your own mind and in your publicity material.

Develop an understanding of Ethics.

With so much magic now being learnt and marketed online, ethics in the field seem to be dropping away. Where we once learned through clubs, conventions and mentors, now it’s often on our own via DVD's and Online Learning. No wonder those starting out sometimes have little idea about what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps we all need to make more of an effort to educate, rather than just shrug and say “it’s just the way it is now.”

What you'll be doing in 10 years’ time is probably not what you expect it to be right now.

Having a 10 year plan is an excellent idea, but things change. Markets change, demand for shows and show styles change, you will change. Be flexible and regularly re-evaluate where your focus should be. This goes against the wisdom of 90% of those motivational quotes that get spread around, but sometimes the bravest thing to do is to give up on a long held dream that doesn't make sense any more.

Money spent on good stage wear is money well spent.

Snappy suits and custom designed stage wear do make a difference. That instant first impression when you walk onstage or into a venue is a powerful thing. If you ignore this you are really wasting an opportunity.

And just because you position yourself as a "street performer" doesn't mean that you just wear the stuff that you normally wear in the street. Develop a costume that fits the style. That adds to the perception.

Look at how The Illusionists touring show use costumes to brand each character in the production.

And not just Onstage. You don't need to go the full "wearing the wizard robes," your full stage outfit every moment of the day, but it can help to have a gimmick that makes you stand out, to be noticed. The hat, a tie pin, chain, broach etc.

My father, not a performer, wore a bow tie every day of his working life. His best friend always wore a carnation in his buttonhole. Every day. They did it on purpose and had decided to do it fairly early in their working lives. It got them noticed about town. Everyone knew them.

Strategies? Be the best dressed person in the room.

Develop a relationship with a good designer or tailor.

Choose a celebrity, understand and model their fashion sense but also work on developing your own trademark look or brand.

Support other local magic shows

Get out there and support other magicians presenting shows for the public. Well attended shows are good for the industry and your marketplace in particular. As the saying goes, "a rising tide lifts all ships."

Use your downtime

If things are a bit slow, treat this as a positive. Work on new material, work on your publicity machine. When things fall into place, and they will, you'll suddenly look back on those days that you frittered away with envy.

Productivity Magic

"If everything's under control, you're going too slow"
Mario Andretti

In explaining to non-magicians or hobbyists what it's like being a full time professional, I often use the analogy of running your own theatre, full time by yourself. The hats you have to wear are many - Business Strategist, Publicist, Marketer, Designer, Accountant, Box Office & Business Manager, Set Designer, Lighting Designer, Choreographer, Human Resources manager, Writer, Creator and of course Performer. Some of these tasks we are able to delegate but we still need to be on top of them. No wonder that Productivity is such an important skill for the successful independent performer. We have a thousand things to do, so how do we get them done and which do we do first.

Some Early Advice

Along with the classic advice "don't leave your wallet in the dressing room," another that is just as useful for young performers is "stop watching daytime television if you intend to make this a business."

As the old timers would always remind us … Show Business is made up of 2 words. And the second is twice as big as the first.

Know what you are going to do the day before.

Having a work system means you can crack on with your projects without much thought at the start of each day.

Deciding the night before what your main priorities are going to be for the next day certainly helps.

As does having - Weekly, Monthly and Year goals.

It also helps ensure you are spending your time between your Big Projects and the little everyday things that get in the way.

Alvin Toffler on the Big Things

"You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things so that all the small things go in the right direction."

Time Chunks

We each operate at different levels of concentration and focus and if you are aware of this you can put it to good use.

I find I can really get going for 20 minutes, totally focused and then tend to get distracted for a short while. I can then get back to it for the same length.

A quick walk, unpack a bag, practice a move, cup of tea etc can provide a quick break and recharge the focus.

Some people can do 50 minutes, some just 10. Try and work out your own optimal time frame.

In scheduling your goals for the day you can then easily estimate and allocate a number of segments to each task. For instance if you work on 20 minute cycles, you might allocate 2 of these on a certain major project, and the remaining time in the hour to the little things.

Clumping

Another useful technique to learn is Clumping.

Do similar things at the same time.

If you have to make a certain number of calls to various clients, suppliers or associates try and get them all done at once.

This helps build a momentum, gives you confidence and hopefully means your other tasks are not interrupted.

The Big Frog First

Mark Twain once said "If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And If it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first."

Brian Tracey gave it a bit of a twist and added "eat the ugliest one first."

Yep, knocking off a session of the tough job early in the day can boost your confidence and keep you moving forward. So, what is it for you .. Cold calls, Tax Returns?

Seinfeld's Secret Tracker

This made a bit of a splash on LifeHacker.com about 6 years ago. Don't overlook it because of it's simplicity.

A young comedian asked Jerry for advice and his reply was simple. To be a better comic you have to tell better jokes. To tell better jokes you have to write every day.

Use a large Year View Wall Calendar and keep it on view. A large red cross is placed through the first day you start writing. Each day you write after that forms a chain.

The secret is ... "don't break the chain." This can be used for - Writing, Practice, Marketing, Exercise, Alcohol/Drug Use etc

Getting Things Done

Dave Allen published GTD back in 2002, subtitled The Art of Stress Free Productivity. It was a huge seller. Many people swear by it. Many people swear about it. My suggestion if you are interested is to read his follow-up book Ready for Anything first. This introduces some of the concepts and ideas and is a lot more accessible. Implementing GTD is a big leap! There are now many software apps that incorporate GTD to certain degrees.

Poker Chip Prompt

A smaller version of the Seinfeld Secret is to use a simple tactile and visual prompter.

For many years I had a stack of 5 Poker Chips on my desk.

My system was this. They would start on the left side and as I knocked off some a repetitive job I would transfer one to the right.

What they tracked could change - Calling someone, Mail piece sent, Old Client contacted etc.

Just the simple fact of them sitting there to the left of the keyboard was a great reminder.

Zen To Done

This is a brilliant book by Leo Baubatu which I've recommended for years. It distils advice from various writers on productivity into a very simple framework that can be implemented in small steps. Unlike GTD, you don’t need to completely change the way you work. Add the small concepts one by one and watch your productivity improve.

Impact / Ease

I mentioned this in my first Ten Little Secrets article. We can all be busy, we can all be getting things done, but are you working on the best things to drive your business forwards? The Impact Ease Grid is a very powerful tool to decide exactly what you should or could be doing AND the priority order.

I have a link to an explanation of this simple yet powerful technique via the Resources page.

More Productivity Magic

"You don't have to 'feel like' doing something in order to do it."
Oliver Burkeman

Anything you do more than once in your magic business - Make a System

Systems save time and promote consistency. We use them in performance, with checklists, run sheets and packing lists, so why not right through our magic business?

Any job you repeat should have a system.
It can be as simple as a checklist - Daily Jobs, Weekly Goals etc or a more complex Systems Manual for your entire Booking Process.

Why reinvent the wheel or try and remember how you do it each time?

And if you ever do take on an assistant, virtual or otherwise, it will really speed up the process.

A couple of examples.

I have a few pieces of software I use from time to time. I don't know them well enough yet to just launch in each time. So every time I use one, out comes my cheat sheet, with shortcuts and procedures.

I also used to spend far too long searching for various files etc until I formed a consistent file, labelling and backup system.

Chunking

Learning to break bigger projects or tasks down into smaller chunks can speed up the whole process and keep you motivated as you complete the smaller steps. You'll get more Little Victories.

Putting together a new show, learning a new routine, breaking into a new market or launching a publicity campaign can all be "chunked" into smaller more manageable pieces so the entire project doesn't look so daunting.

Daily Journal – Your Accountability Partner

Writing a quick Daily Journal is a great way to keep on top of your Goals & Deadlines. It doesn't need to be huge, but if you do it consistently it will help you keep on track.

Another related system I have used for years and taught others is what I named "Little Victories."

I keep a word doc file on my computer desktop and at the end of each office day I'll try to update it with 2 or 3 Good Things that happened during the day. Just a short line for each and the date.

This quickly grows into an amazing positive reinforcement of the progress you are making and the good things around you.

If you have a quick look at this first thing in the morning or if you are having down moments, it can really boost your attitude.

This is similar to the Things I'm Grateful for lists that people often share on FaceBook.

Don't wait for the Ducks to get in Line

Procrastination and waiting for everything to be perfect before launching into a new project can often result in it never actually happening.

I had a friend who was an amazing photographer and he wanted desperately to do it as a profession. But every few months when I saw him, over the next few years, he was still "building his studio."
He kept tweaking, changing and getting it ready before he thought he could launch.

He's probably still doing so.

Take action sooner rather than later.

Weekly One Thing

The "Weekly One Thing" is a concept used by a lot of Coaches, Membership Sites and Mastermind Groups. But it's an easy exercise to do by yourself and very effective.

You decide .... What's the ONE THING that you could knock off in the next week that would have the most impact on your business?

Not too big that you won't complete it.
Not too small that you'll knock it off too easily.
And commit to it!

This could be to your accountability buddy or partner, or just written up on your White Board, daily task list or Journal.

Then in the hurly burly of life - doing shows, domestic duties and running your office, you can still keep moving your main important projects forwards.
Check on progress each day or at very least half way through the week.
And make a big deal of it when you knock it off. Keep a record of your progress through the year.

Remember though, size is not really the important thing here. It's the impact!

Making that one phone call that you've been putting off for months because it scares you, may have much more impact than spending the whole week designing a new webpage.
Going to a networking event may have more impact than spending all week working on a new routine.

After 52 weeks you'll be amazed at the power of this simple tool. It really builds momentum.

Actions

Check out the Impact Ease Grid concept to help pinpoint your Weekly One Thing

Check out the Seinfeld Tracker to keep a track of progress.

Block out Distractions

Email, Phones, Social Media & Television can all suck your attention away from your magic business focus.

Be aware of where you spend your time.

Don’t let others dictate where your focus should be.

There are tools like Rescue Time that track exactly how you are spending your time. It's very revealing.

Ditch Outlook

If you are still running your email through a dinosaur like Outlook, you need to move on. Seriously.

Gmail allows far greater control with - Tags, Rules, Filters etc and can give you back some order, flexibility and time.

Buy Time

Explore what tasks you could delegate to others, freeing up your time to focus on the things you do best. Is it - Invoicing, Accounts, Social Media Updates, Prospecting, Research, Grocery Shopping, Graphics, SEO etc.

Sites like - Fiverr, Elance, DesignCrowd , Freelancer etc, can all provide you expertise and more importantly "extra time" in your day.

The Magic of Creativity

"Impossible only means that you haven't found the solution yet."

In the field of the "Creative Arts" it's debatable where Magic actually ranks. The mix of professionals, part timers and hobbyists always ensures a mixed approach to creativity. Sure there are many bright lights - but for every Tommy Wonder, Marco Tempest or Raymond Crowe there are a thousand hacks trotting out store bought routines and using stock or stolen lines with little regard. Here are 10 ideas and thoughts on Creativity & Magic.

Creativity comes in different forms

Remember, it's not just about inventing effects, routines or moves.

This is perhaps the biggest stumbling block that many face and then use as justification in their own lack of further effort. They have never managed to invent an effect, so decide that they are not creative and then stop trying at any aspect of inserting creativity into their work.

Shaping routines, scripting, marketing/promotion, business building, character development, staging etc are all areas that can be given the creative touch.

We are all creative

We are all creative, but in different ways.

Understanding this is an important step, as is discovering and then leveraging your own skills. You may be a slow methodical, deliberate type or the spontaneous type. You might excel in reframing concepts or be a polisher of routines, chopping out more than you add in. Finding your mode is important.

Capture Everything

We all have great ideas. They come at night, in the shower, while driving to a job, while exercising and in the middle of a performance. The big difference is, it's the clever people who have learnt to capture these ideas.

Ipads, smart phones and apps like EverNote have made this a lot easier but are you ALWAYS ready to grab that smart idea when it comes along?

Learn some Tools

The old saying goes "if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem is going to start looking like a nail"

Here are 3 easy tools that you can use straight away by yourself. Don't dismiss them as too easy or too basic, they do work.

1. Think like someone else-
Ask yourself the question'" How would XXXX do it?" Choose a few people you admire and try and place yourself inside their minds. This gives you permission to think in ways you wouldn't normally use. You can suddenly be bolder, braver, smarter or faster. Make a list of three people and you have an instant Brains Trust.

2. SCAMPER
The advertising man Alex Osborn developed the basic idea of this powerful tool which was then shaped into the checklist SCAMPER by Robert Eberle. In simple terms, you apply each of these active words to your problem. A quick Google search will give you a fuller description of the technique.

Substitute - What elements could be changed for something else? The props, the rules?
Combine - Can we combine anything? The process, the purpose, the place?
Adapt - Can we model anything? Perhaps from a different field?
Magnify or Modify - What should be bigger or more often? What could be changed?
Put to other Uses - What else could we do with this?
Eliminate - What could be dropped out
Rearrange - Is there a better order for these things
It is a perfect technique for magic, both the performance and the business.

3. Random Elements

Another classic technique is to input random elements into your thought patterns.
If you are working on a problem or exploring opportunities, throw in some random elements. Grab a dictionary and pick a couple of words. Think about the attributes of those words and apply them to your thinking.

For example if you had picked the word River, you might think - Flow, Wet, Cold, Fish etc.

How do these relate to what you are working on?

It doesn't have to be a BIG idea!

Small ideas are just as valuable as huge earth shattering ideas for many reasons. They can grow into big ideas, they can often be replicated in other parts of your business, they are harder for others to copy and if you don't learn to capture and evaluate the many little ideas that come whizzing past, are you going to be ready when the big one does come?

Stop doing "lines"

In my recent interview with mentalist Christopher Carter, published on our blog, he mentioned one of his career breakthrough moments was when he made the deliberate decision to stop using stock lines and jokes in his act. This step allowed him to really explore who he was onstage and develop as a performer.

It's quite a challenge, could you do it?

Reading List

I tend to suggest reading non magic books on creativity and then applying the lessons back to magic. Michalko - Thinkertoys, Oech - Whack on the side of the head, Shenk - The Houdini Solution are 3 good ones.

In the Magic field, Stewart James -The first 50 Years describes several of his unique thinking techniques and of course Fitzkee - The Trick Brain is a classic.

There is a longer Reading list on the Resource Page

Memory Magic

"A clear conscience is often the sign of a bad memory."

Unfortunately, we are not all blessed with an excellent memory to start with and as we get older, most of us also feel it gets worse and worse. But I strongly believe we all have the ability to improve our memory skills. I've confirmed this by teaching live workshops to thousands of people over the years and from feedback from my own memory book and online training course.

Here's some thoughts on "why" every mystery performer should get some Memory Training and some ideas on "how" you should go about it.

The Whys?

Names & Faces / Facts & Figures

To be blunt, your life will be better with a better memory. No more searching the multi story car park to find your car. No more searching the house to find the keys. No more embarrassing moments when your long lost best friend turns up and you can't remember his name. Or the clients name. Or the name of the spectator onstage with you that you heard just moments before.

Moves and Routine Sequences & Show Order

The learning of complicated move sequences becomes a lot easier if you use active memory techniques apart from just sheer "learning by rote."

Scripts

Learning scripts for Trade Shows, Corporate Events, MC work and your own shows will become easier. Joke sequences for stand-up etc.

Where things are / Multiple Outs / Hidden Crib Sheets/ Pocket management

All of these things can be improved or eliminated.

Myriad of routine possibilities

Of course a whole new world of powerful routines opens up to people with strong memory skills.

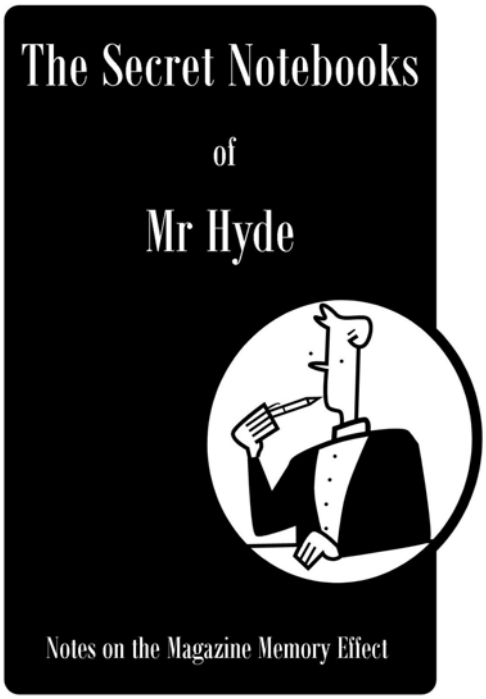
Stacked deck work

Magazine Memory

Super Memory

Knights Tour etc

You can also, once you have mastered an enhanced memory, actually go on to teach these skills either in your shows or in separate workshop sessions. Notable performers such as Barrie Richardson, Chuck Hickok and many others have all taught a simple system as part of their corporate presentations, holiday programs and cruise ship lectures.



The How

There is an abundance of great resources out there to improve your memory skills. Now I've convinced you that you should, here is a selection of my favourites.

General Books

Harry Lorayne - The Memory Book . Brilliant magician and memory expert, Harry has a raft of Memory titles. This wasn't his first, but it became his best seller and is a fantastic place to start.

Dominic O'Brian - How to develop a perfect memory. World Memory champion O'Brian explores a few different approaches.

Use Your Memory – Tony Buzan. Tony is a great teacher, this will really help you.

For Magicians

Corinda - 13 Steps to Mentalism - Step 3

Jack Kent Tiller – Various Publications. The Memory Pill is a complete Memory act.

Tony Andruzzi – Magazine Memory Act – Flora & Co

Barrie Richardson – Act Two Theatre of the Mind.

Chuck Hickok - Mentalism Incorporated

Zufall - Magazine Memorizing - Memory Trix 1

Simon Aronson - A stack to Remember

Juan Tamariz - Mnemonica

It would of course be remiss of me to neglect to mention my own Magazine Memory manuscript and Online Udemy Course.

You can get details via the Resource Page.

Magic Accountability Buddy

"Hey Buddy ... can you share some time"

Do you need a Career Coach, Mastermind Group or Accountability Buddy?

Having a personal business coach for your entertainment business is a great investment, but it can seem expensive for some and they are often hard to find. An alternative and cheaper option is the Mastermind group, but these are also sometimes tricky to organise and participate in.

A third option is to get an Accountability Buddy! Skype, Facebook messaging etc has made it easy to catch up with a Buddy on a regular basis and they are becoming more and more popular. A weekly 15 -30 minutes can do wonders for your magic business, keeping both of you focused and excited.

I've tried all three of these options over the years and each has taken me to a new level in my business.

The Why

In the very simplest of terms having a 'Magic Accountability Buddy' will accelerate your magic business growth. I guarantee it. It will keep you focused on the commitments you make. Ticking off the little steps to knock off the big goals, all in the time frame you set yourself! You are putting Peer Pressure to work.

You will also grow by helping your buddy. Often, seeing the gaps, the possibilities and the sticking points in others will help you reflect on your own. You often read in forums and hear in discussions "I'm not very good at selling myself, but I can really sell others!" Yep, it's a very common self limiting belief. Helping your buddy move through their options, possibilities and challenges will also let you think and act on those of your own. Plus of course, they will also be directly helping you keep on track.

The Who

The internet, email, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Texting etc has multiplied the number of people who could become your "AB." While Face to Face is excellent, cast your net wide. I always suggest start by looking at your FaceBook friends. We tend to gravitate to people sharing the same hopes, dreams and ambitions even if we don't know them very well. And they could live anywhere! And forget the "oh they could be my competition" thinking! And, if you think it's a good idea, there's no point in just sitting around waiting for someone to ask you. Take the initiative.

But also don't limit yourself to people in your specific market niche or even industry. In my past Mastermind groups I've had lawyers, criminologists, building developers and entrepreneurs all giving me fascinating and valuable support.

The How

Here are some important tips if you've never done this before.

Firstly, agree on a framework and guidelines.

Catch Up on a set/regular basis. It's nice to chat to your magic friends and find out what they have been doing, but the power of the AB system comes from more than that. Weekly is great and if you are serious, you can add a mid week progress check.

Set a time limit to the sessions. We all lead busy lives. After the initial couple of sessions, keep them tight.

Start with a trial period. This is not a marriage, you are not committing for life. Agree on a set period and then assess if you want to go on. It may take a while to find the right AB and the right set of guidelines.

Agree on Confidentiality.

Both keep Journals & Notes. This is a two sided thing. You are both working on each other.

The What

Here are some thought starters on what to discuss.

Goals, Progress and Check-ins. "Do What? By When? Perceived Obstacles?"

Chunking. Breaking up the Big Goals into the smaller steps.

The One Big Thing for the Week

The Book Club Approach. Work through a book together. Booked Solid, The 12 Week Year or Zen to Done would give you months of great productive shared activity.

If you need more ideas, a Google search will be very rewarding. If you would like to find a Magic Accountability Buddy, visit our MagicCoach Facebook group where we keep an informal list of interested people.

SECTION 2 Magic Markets

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This is a collection of just a few different market areas that magicians can explore.

Restaurants, Cruising and Trade Shows have long been lucrative areas for the working professional.

Speaking & MC work, are slightly different yet popular areas, where people can use the performance skills they already have to enter into new fields and add zing to their presentations. We've seen a boom in Magicians adding "Speaker" to their title over the last 10 years. .

Magically Speaking

"Speak now or forever hold your peace."

The lure of Professional Speaking bites many magicians. And it bites hard. The promise of huge fees, exotic travel, adoring audiences, bountiful Back of Room sales and few props to schlep around is an enticing one. The reality can be bit different and the road to success has many pot holes and traffic lights. Here are 10 tips to speed your progress into this market.

Spend at least a couple of years of serious study before you boldly proclaim yourself as "Magician AND Speaker" on your website and in your publicity material.

First impressions are important and especially for Speaker Bureau and Corporate Bookers. If you are not 100% comfortable, credible and focused in your particular niche it will show and you don't often get a second chance. It's also hard to regain credibility if you suddenly switch from being an expert in one field, to being an expert in a completely different one, if you find you are just not getting traction in your first chosen area.

Three Important Questions about Your Topic

1. Were you passionate about this topic BEFORE you decided to speak about it?

2. Do you have serious experience in the field? E.g. if you are going to speak about Leadership in the corporate world, have you actually ever led a team in this environment?

3. Do you walk the talk 24/7? Are you a living and breathing example of what you speak on?

If you answered NO to any of these you may need to have a rethink.

Reading List

Here are two of my current favourites -

Money Talks - Alan Weiss. An excellent speaker who will challenge your perceptions and assumptions about the industry. I've seen Alan speak on a couple of occasions and his sometimes contrarian advice is gold.

The Wealthy Speaker - Jane Atkinson. This comes as a book / audio book / workbook, but you can buy it in different combos. Jane worked first as a Speaker Agent and Bureau Manager representing many top level speakers before becoming a business coach for speakers. An excellent step by step approach to the whole industry.

My bookshelves are full of many other titles from experts such as Burt Dubin, Dottie & Lilly Walters, Matt Church and more, but these first two are a great place to start.

Join your national association of Professional Speakers

The Global Speakers Federation is a framework of independent speaking organizations around the globe. You can find details of your countries main professional group here and details of events meetings etc.

http://www.globalspeakers.net/federation/associations

Strongly suggest you attend an event or two and get a feel for the community. Yes, it's going to cost you a bit more than attending your monthly magic club meeting, but well worth it. If you like what you see and the people that you meet, join up.

And if you do join, here's another secret ... get involved. Join the committee, volunteer to help on the front desk at meetings etc. It's the quickest way to establish yourself within any group and the rewards can be immense. I served as membership officer at my local chapter for many years and made many very valuable friends on the committee who have helped my career in many different ways.

Toastmasters

I get often asked about the worldwide Toastmasters organisation. If you want to become a better more confident speaker then Toastmasters may help. But I don't believe it will really help you forge a career as a speaker. You would be better served by looking at the Global Speakers Federation groups listed above who are more focused on the business side of the industry. While there are many very fine speakers who have passed through Toastmasters they also have a habit of teaching a certain "style or "formula." This is just my observation and personal opinion. Many people swear by them, some swear about them.

Professional Speaking is another house with many rooms.

When people hear you are a Professional Speaker, they invariably get an image of a motivational speaker delivering dynamic keynotes in front of vast audiences. Perhaps you think the same.

The reality is, there are many different modes of delivery and niches within the industry. Just like magic. There is Training, Coaching, Workshops, Breakouts, MC / Host, Trade Shows, Infotainment, as well as Keynoting, to name just some of the areas that can be covered. There is not just one approach or business model that works best for everyone.

Warning 1.

There are many great mystery performers like Giovanni, Joel Bauer, Shep Hyken, Paul Gertner, Jon Stetson and others who have developed their own niches in the world of speaking. You owe it to the art, to yourself and to them, to be very aware and respect what others are already doing. There are plenty of topics, market niches, effects & presentations that can be explored without treading on any other toes.

Warning 2.

Many other speakers have an interesting perspective on the art we love and cherish. They see it as just a tool, a way to add a bit of zing and to illustrate a point.

Many will happily visit a magic shop and buy up a couple of tricks and slot them into their speech, in the same way they might also learn to juggle, learn to strum a tune on a ukulele or recite a poem.

This is going to frustrate and annoy the hell out of you.

Speaker Bureaus

My comment about speaker bureaus is ... "they don't need you until you don't need them."

They may seem like a short cut to success and the thrill of being listed on a Bureau site next to famous celebrities and business leaders is undeniably great, but they can also be very hard nuts to crack for some people and somewhat fickle partners at the best of times. Too many up and coming speakers spend way too much time chasing the bureaus with little or no result.

My advice, focus on creating your own clients, your own reputation and your own status within your niche. Once this is happening , at some point the Bureaus will come knocking, as their own bank of clients will be asking for you by name and then it's the perfect moment to form strong relationships and take your fees to the next level.

Tip

Don't tell the story about the starfish

or the one about the lighthouse and the battleship.

Cruising

"Vaudeville isn't dead … It's just moved out to sea"

I'm going through my 3rd age of performing on Cruise Ships. I cut my teeth in the early '80's, working on the rust buckets that came out from Russia in the Australian summers and cruised around the South Pacific. Cheap booze and raucous fun loving crowds were a great combination for the punchy stand-up style I was presenting at the time. 15 years later, Lynda and I focused on the very top end of the market, cruising on 5 Star Crystal & Silversea around the world. Over the last few years I'm exploring the possibilities once again, primarily taking select assignments on Princess, P&O and Cunard to give me a break from corporate. Here are some thoughts for those thinking about going to sea.

"I'd like to get into cruising"

This is something I hear all the time. The depth of my response to these people is directly related to the answer to the next question.

Have you invested the hundred dollars or so required to read the recommended books on the Market?

The Cruise industry is constantly changing. Sure, parts are exactly the same as they were 30 years ago, but other aspects have changed quite dramatically. When I decided to get back into it again the first new book I read was the one from Vanish publisher Paul Romhany, "Entertaining on a Cruise Ship."

I also hear great things about the new Nick Lewin book "Cruise Ship Magic 101." A slightly older book is Fred Becker "Cruise Ship Magicians Handbook" that's also packed with solid advice. I believe this book has just been revised.

This small investment in money and time will get you up to speed very quickly and help avoid some of the many pitfalls that lie in wait.

Understand the Marketplace

Working on cruise ship #1 can be very different to working on cruise ship #2. People who haven't cruised tend to see the industry as just one market, where in reality there are many brands and styles of cruising each catering for different demographics. Each of these have different requirements. When planning your material, costuming, music etc, it's important to understand this. You will also find the demographic on each ship changes depending on the duration and destinations.

Be Ready

Don’t try and work the market until you are ready. If you launch yourself at the Cruise Lines and fail to make the grade, you can ruin the opportunity for yourself for a very long time. If you do poorly in the shows, fail to dress properly around the ship or in anyway antagonise the passengers or Cruise Staff, then you get a big black mark. A mark that could remain for years.

Be Prepared

Just like a boy scout you need to be ready for any eventuality. What will you do if one of your bags goes missing. Can you come up with a solid show without your props? What if the Cruise Director asks you to do another 25 minutes later in the cruise that you hadn’t prepared for?

I keep a notebook with me that lists my emergency act. Routines I know I can put together from things I can obtain onboard. Pens, paper, cardboard, envelopes, bags, fruit, etc.

Be Flexible / Modular

It's great to have a standard show that is honed to perfection, with great transitions, highs, lows and interesting dynamics, but the reality of ship board performing is that you need to be flexible. The 45 minutes that you love to do might need to be 55 on a different ship, or 2 split shows of 25 minutes. Princess are currently trialling a 30-35 minutes show structure. If you are working at the start or end of a cruise, some lines have a welcome aboard and/or farewell show that you might also be asked to be in that could take another 12 - 20 minutes of material each.

Double Up

Another useful principle when planning your cruise material is that of finding Double Uses.

Can a prop or gimmick be used for more than one routine? Importantly, can the same item be used without the audience thinking, "I've seen that before. "

Hidden gimmicks and techniques of course can. Pre show work, nail writers etc, as long as the reveal is significantly different. Utility items likewise can serve in different routines, a good multipurpose wallet for example.

But the principle also applies to other items you carry to your assignments. With increased costs and restrictions on what you can fly with, every item you take should be considered. For instance I have a small plastic box that keeps my stage makeup and some other bits and pieces safe during travel. It also doubles up as a prediction container that someone in the audience holds during the show in one of my emergency routines.

Be Different

What will you do if you turn up for a segment of a world cruise and you find that you will be the 6th magician that this particular audience has seen in the last few weeks? It happens all the time. They have already experienced - Note in orange, vanishing Bandana, torn & restored newspaper, linking rings & snowstorm or for the mentalists - confabulation, magic square, book test, PK Touches and a design duplication! How much of your material is a straight off the magic shop shelf?

Be Aware

Some Cruise Ship theatres are state of the art brilliant, with terrific light and sound and all the help you need. But many rooms are not that great for magic. The sight lines are killers with audience wrapped almost right around a thrust stage and at times high above you looking straight down. If it's rough, your props could topple and fall or just slide straight off the stage. At times it's also hard to get people up to help and a rough sea could make it impossible to get anyone up at all.

Be Realistic

Is getting into cruising the right thing for your long term career plan?

This market can be a trap. The relatively easy work schedule and the life at sea cocooned from the "real world" all sounds great, but there are a couple of factors that should be considered. Firstly, there is a limit to the amount of money you can make. Cruise lines are actually now paying less than they were 10-20 years ago. In fact some lines are not paying at all and rely on a steady stream of magicians who should know better performing for free in exchange for a free cruise.

Secondly, do you have other "big plans" in your career and life that will be put on hold and probably shelved if you head out to sea. Performing at sea should fit into the bigger plan, not just be something you tick off your bucket list.

Get your Passport now and keep it up to date

If you are serious about the idea of working on Cruise Ships you will need a passport. Get it right now, don't wait till you are offered a contract. Not only will this be a positive action step towards your goal, you may be surprised how many contracts are offered on a last minute basis. (Fact. I'm editing this eBook in my cabin at sea somewhere near the fabulous Trobriand Islands. I was contacted on Friday evening and asked if I could fly to the ship on the Monday morning to join this 10 day cruise!)

Trade Shows

"There's No Business Like Show Business"

Ahh, long hard days on big hard floors, performing for people who just want freebies and some time away from the office. Why do so many magicians see this as a "holy grail" performing venue? I've done my share. I once risked permanent damage juggling razor sharp chef's knives all day at a catering expo and in another bizarre contract, wandered a huge trade show floor for 5 minutes each hour with a briefcase emblazoned "PROBLEMS" till I eventually met my partner on the display stand, who thankfully had a clipboard offering "SOLUTIONS." Now this client had declined magic, she wanted something arty, so that's what she got.

You see, it's all about the client, a point emphasised over and over by all the Trade Show experts. I was lucky enough to spend a bit of time with two experts last month on a quick trip to Manhattan. Lior Manor & Seth Kramer. Seth is the author of The Modern Trade Show Handbook, widely regarded as the must read book on the topic. I convinced him to share a few inside secrets of the Trade Show business.

Seth's book The Modern Trade Show handbook can be found here

http://www.trafficstoppers.com/handbook

It's not about you

Being a good (and successful) trade show magician is not about the tricks you perform and it's not about you and your ego. The secret to being a good trade show magician is knowing that it's all about the company you're representing and their product or services.

Easy Stage Riser

In a pinch, an aerobics step makes an excellent riser. It's adjustable, inexpensive, and can be found in any local sporting goods store.

Chest Level Tricks

You can start your show with effects such as the Cups and Balls or the Three Shell Game that require a table top, but as your crowd builds, you will want to get the tricks up off the table and into the air so the majority of the crowd can see what's going on. (My friend Bob Kohler's Ultimate Three Fly is an excellent choice for a trade show trick that plays at chest level.)

Business Card Swap

Don't ever give out your business card without receiving one in re-turn. By obtaining a reciprocal business card, you can follow up with that contact after the show with a casual email or voice mail.

Know the trick Inside Out

Trade Show pioneer Mike Rogers gave me some advice early in my career (besides always telling me to “slow down, you're not going to a fire”). He said, “Seth, you need to know your tricks inside and out so that you can perform them in your sleep if necessary. You shouldn't have to think about any aspect of your tricks. You will need to focus most of your attention on the product information and how you will deliver the message to the crowd and connect with them.”

Practice Inserting Custom Messages

Finding the ideal spots in your show for your marketing messages can be tricky. One exercise I've found to be helpful is customizing every show I do. I'm not talking specifically about trade shows here; I mean birthday parties, family shows, anniversary parties, a restaurant gig, etc. You can always find out some key details about the guest of honour when you book the show, or ask about the unique features of a restaurant before you start working.

Ethical Marketing Matters

Don't get a reputation as someone who will try to undercut another working performer by approaching their client when they aren't around. Chances are that word of your visit will get right back to the performer as soon as they return. Karma has a way of biting you in the ass. As they say, what goes around comes around. There's plenty of work for everyone; just go out and get it on your own.

Work with your fellow performers

Just as you are there at the show to gather crowds for your client, the other magician's and presenter's are there to do the same for theirs. It makes little sense to try and one-up the competition by performing your show non-stop in an attempt to keep the other performer from doing their job.

Connections & Communication

Make your product pitch interactive. Ask questions during your pitch and try to get feedback from your audience. If you are able to connect with your audience and create a rapport, you will find that you are in a unique position to qualify potential leads for your clients' sales team.

Broaden Your Study

Become a student of sales. The bookstores are full of books (and audio books) that will teach you how to sell more effectively. Make a promise to yourself; For every five magic books you read, read one business book.

The MC Business

"For 20 years he has suffered for his art. Tonight, it's your turn ... Please welcome ... "

Over the last 15 years, being an MC at Corporate Events has become the major part of my business. There's still always Magic or Mentalism involved both on and offstage, but it has required a new way of thinking on many aspects of performance, content and of course the business itself. It's a large industry with many different segments - Corporate, Association, Social, Wedding, Trade Show Infotainment and that most tricky of assignments ... Magic events. Here are some thoughts that apply to most of these segments.

It's Not About You

It's all about the event. Everything you do or don't do must add to the success of the event. Even if you've spent hours preparing a custom effect and script that includes the names of the CEO, their product, USP and next years sales target, if you have to cut it out because of time pressure you must. People should walk away and say 'what a great event" rather than "what a great MC."

Less is More

One of the mistakes I see many beginner MC's make is to try too hard. Too much material, too many jokes, too many activities. Doing less is usually best.

One Point of Contact

This was something that was taught to me by one of my early mentors, Ron Tacchi. Have one point of contact. At large events there are many people who think they can give you instructions. The CEO, the Event Organiser, Committee members, Venue staff and even delegates. The person who comes up and says "can I have 2 minutes onstage" or "could you read this out please." Sometimes the 2 minutes turns into 10, the announcement was a joke that falls flat etc. Establish early on who your One Point of Contact is and flick all requests on to them. It saves a lot of trouble.

Liaison

A lot of the role of the MC is Project Management. At a Corporate event a lot of your time will be spent as liaison between - Client, Conference Organiser, Audio Visual Team, Speakers/Entertainers, Venue Staff, Delegates. They each have their own concerns and needs and you are often the glue that holds it all together. The sooner you understand that the better you will be at your role.

AV Techs

Audio Visual Teams at large events are often hard people to deal with. They have their own way of doing things and often are under great pressure running up to event time. Here's another trick from Ron. When you first meet them, jot down their names. Then as you see things that need to be fixed or changed, jot that down too. Don't keep interrupting their work flow each time you spot something with individual requests. One list of 5 things that need to be changed is much easier to deal with than 5 separate requests of individual things.

Source Book

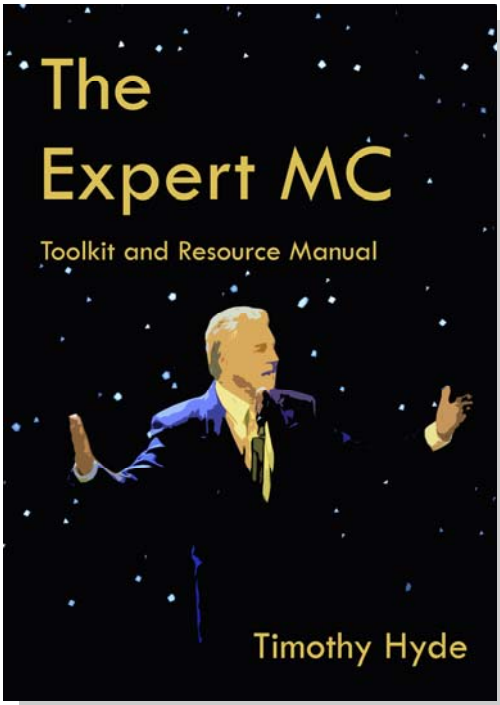
The sooner you start an MC Source Book the better. Have a dedicated notebook, computer document or online system like Evernote set up to capture every useful - idea, joke, quote, story, icebreaker, intro, thank you and filler material that you come across. You will be amazed how quickly it builds up. Also go through your master list of routines and effects, and list the ones that would be suitable for MC assignments

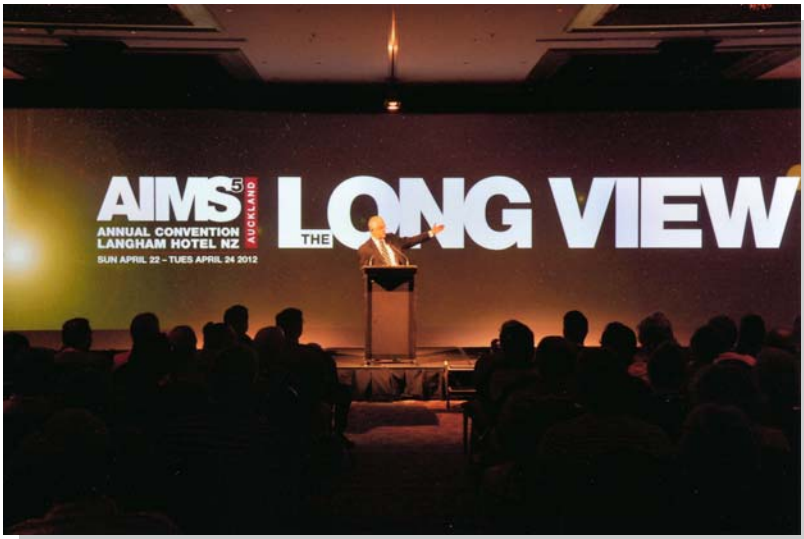
Reading List

There are some terrific books on being an MC and many prominent magicians have tackled the subject. Most of these focus on performing at Magic Events rather than Corporate, however there is plenty to be learnt from them all. Magic authors include - Mike Caveney, Terry Seabrooke, Karrell Fox, Billy McComb & Aldo Colombini.

ExpertMC.com

12 months ago we started up a newsletter dedicated to the MC Business. This has quickly grown to over 600 subscribers at the time of writing and now includes - a Free 7 Part Resource Kit, Private LinkedIn Community, a YouTube Channel and Blog. Visit http://www.ExpertMC.com





The MC Business Part 2

"I see we have broken up into little discussion groups!"

Following the publication of the previous notes in Vanish I received several questions from readers. Some of the questions I got afterwards were about keeping both events and presenters On Time. We discuss that tricky problem and a wonderful MC technique here.

Keeping Events On Time

This breaks down into a number of elements, each adding to your ability to bring the event in on time. Preparation is essential.

In the planning phase is your client scheduling in both "wriggle room" and time for "housekeeping announcements?" Time for both is vital. Wriggle room is an extra 5 - 10 minutes actually scheduled into the program here and there that can be used for unexpected events or to absorb a speaker/performer going overtime. Suddenly the CEO wants to give a quick talk, a Sponsor wants to draw a prize or it's someone's birthday and you need to celebrate. Wriggle room helps.

Housekeeping announcements can also take longer than you think. So do Introductions and Thanks. These can be perhaps 5 minutes for each speaker especially if you are giving them a gift. If you have a busy schedule of say 10 speakers, that's almost an hour of time that sometimes does not get planned for. Bring it up with your client before the event.

Be punctual yourself. If you say you are going to start after morning tea at 11am, start then. If you are perceived as always starting 5 minutes late people will start factoring that into their own behaviour. Another quick cup of coffee or a phone call.

Have some people movers. The larger the event the more you need. 5 minutes before a session is about to start activate the team and sound any cues you have that the event is about to restart. With Association events I like to meet with the committee before the start and get them onside with keeping the event on time. If you don't do this they can be the worst offenders, remaining outside a meeting room chatting with groups of delegates while you are trying to keep things moving along. A pre-emptive strike helps here.

Keeping Presenters and Performers on time

The first thing I do is ask the presenter if they know how long they have been allocated. This can be a big clue to their attitude about the schedule and pinpoint the people who can be trouble later.

Once you have discussed how long they actually do have, stress the importance of keeping the event on time. Another psychological ploy is to mention that the whole event must finish by a certain time and later presenters will have to cut if we are running over.

If you are using timecards point out to the presenter exactly where you are sitting. Ask them what signs they would like. Most speakers like a halfway sign and then 10 minutes and 5 minutes to go. Importantly, ask them to acknowledge that they have seen the sign. This is important, especially with the people you have pinpointed earlier as perhaps trouble. Just a quick nod is sufficient.

Next, I always make a "joke" that it would be embarrassing for both of us if I had to come onstage and ask them to stop talking. Another psychological ploy that works.

Finally, don't be afraid to walk onstage and actually do what you threatened. It's what you are there to do. This is another thing that you can and should discus with your client beforehand.

Running Gags for MC's

Many performers use a running gag throughout their shows tying a string of different effects together. The same technique can be used by MC's in both Corporate and Magic Convention work.

Preshow, ask each presenter the same question and incorporate these answers each time you intro or thank a speaker. For example - What was the first album you bought? What did you want to be when you were young? What superpower would you like to have?

It doesn't sound much but after the first couple of presenters it builds into a great continuity piece.

These Tips are from our new book - The Expert MC - Toolkit & Resource Manual

Restaurant Magic

"A vital part of the food chain."

Regular contracts in restaurants provide an important piece of the magic marketing puzzle for many magicians. For part timers it's an ideal arrangement, a supplement to their regular income. For those starting out, it's a great way to hone skills and can also be an excellent stepping stone into becoming a full timer, performing multiple nights in different venues. For others, the amount of spin off work they can generate makes it very worthwhile.

People are sometimes surprised to find out that after 35 years performing full time I think I've only ever worked a restaurant gig on two occasions, and this was to help out a friend who was sick. So for this Ten Little Secrets article I asked some of my MagicCoach.com colleagues to contribute some tips. Huge thanks to - Joey Pipia, Jacques le Sueur, Jeff Bibik, Terry Parrett, Glen Rhodes & Hart Keane.

Attitude

Start by thinking from the standpoint of the restaurant owner, or manager. What business benefit will your magic be bringing to this person? Joey Pipia

You are not getting hired to work in the restaurant, position yourself as an entertainer working WITH the restaurant. You are a businessman just like the owner, not a staff member. Jacques le Sueur

Don't over think asking for money. Restaurant managers and owners sign cheques all day, for suppliers of all kinds. You're just another supplier. Don't sweat bullets because your price sounds like a lot to you. Decide what you want to get paid, and tell them. They will either say yes or no. Jacques le Sueur

Getting the Gig

As for booking a place, persistence has seemed to pay off best for me. It is a dance between you and the owner/ management that can take some time develop. Go into the restaurant and have some food or a drink first to see if the fit seems right for you. Is the space adequate to walk around with impeding the flow of service? Some city restaurants are so tight it is impossible to stand between tables to perform. Check out the clientele. Are these the people you want to be performing for? I am looking for folks that will book me for other work. Is the place busy enough to keep you busy performing? Managers never like to see their high-price magicians standing around. Be careful about selling magic as a sure way to increase traffic on a slow night. It may, or it may not, and it never happens quickly. Better to sell it on a night that is already going to be good, your magic is making it better. Jeff Bibik

When I speak to the management about doing magic there, I want to speak in words they understand, so this is what I say "Hello, my name is Jeff Bibik, I own an entertainment company and we specialize in providing magic night promotions to restaurants and bars. I've been a professional magician for many years, and I've presented successful magic night promotions across the country. Have you experienced close up tableside magic before?? It's a great form of entertainment, and your restaurant would be the perfect place to have a magician walking around".....this can kick off the conversation and lead to the booking. Jeff Bibik

Know when to leave.

A few years back, I attended a retirement function for a former boss. (Actually the only non-magic job I ever had.) After the office party, a few of us went to a local restaurant, where a friend of mine was performing as the house magician. There was 8-10 of us at the table, and some of us hadn’t seen each other for quite a few years, and were really enjoying catching up. My magician friend came over, and launched into a 20 minute set. Truthfully, none of us cared about the magic in the slightest, but no one wanted to be the “rude one” to ask him to leave. His “tone-deafness” to the situation was astonishing, and that night, rather than enhancing the event, magic pretty much nearly killed a fun night. Know when to leave. Terry Parrett

Make Noise

Get the patrons clapping, cheering and making noise…I had several routines that encouraged cheering and clapping…even though management where busy elsewhere…they knew things were going well because they could 'hear' the reactions…even though they were not always in a position to 'see' the reactions. My favourite was saying was "the more you cheer, the more I get paid"…it was fun and got them cheering like crazy. Glen Rhodes

Job Security

At every table you must have a call to action! When you finish your set say, "If you enjoyed the show, please mention something to the manager on your way out". A manager is used to hearing negative things (bad food, bitchy waitress, etc) all night so if he is hearing positive things on the nights you're there you will guarantee yourself a long term contract (or at least a special place in the manager's heart!).

Here is my Pro Tip: A restaurant should be paying you well enough that a $1-$5 tip isn't that big of a deal in the grand scheme of things. So here is how you guarantee that the manager will hear positive comments all night. When you see a guest start to hand you a smaller tip ($1-$5), refuse it. Instead, lean in real close to him/her, like you're going to tell them a secret and say, "Please, keep that, the biggest tip you could give me would be to go over and mention to the manager how much you and your table enjoyed the magic and that you will be coming in again, with friends, etc."

Think about the psychology here, now the guest is going to work for that money you allowed them to keep! They literally feel "in debt" to you. It won't just be like you mentioned it in passing, but that you specifically told them to do it in 'trade' for letting them keep their cash. Trust me, you will see them get up and go over to talk with the manager. Or they will specifically call the manager over and talk with him/her. Now that is Job Security! Hart Keane

Book More Outside Gigs:

People will only associate you with the venue they see you performing at. If they see you at a corporate event, they will think you only do corporate. See you on a cruise, that you only do cruises, etc. Well the same goes for restaurants! If they see you working a restaurant, they will think you only work restaurants. Now we all know that isn't the case, but they don't! So how do we let them know what else we do? Tell Them!

During your performances at tables constantly mention other types of events and markets that you work, ie. "I did this at a company event the other night and the CEO offered me a job!". You can just make stuff up, you're not hurting anyone, you are simply putting the bug in their ear that you do other types of events.

Inevitably, they will ask you for your card. Now here's the real secret...Don't Give Them One! Not until you have gotten their info! I carry a small pad of paper with me and write down their info if they don't have a card. I simply tell them that I will follow up with them and send them information. Everybody likes information:)

Think about it this way, if you want to get a date with a pretty girl do you get their info or give them yours? No brainer ;) Hart Keane

Jeff Bibik

Hart Keane

Terry Parrett

Joey Pipia

Jacques le Sueur,

Glen Rhodes

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Three Powerful Corporate Close Up Strategies

Here are three tips to think about if you are booked for a large corporate event doing Close Up.

1. Whenever a function has a registration desk I make sure I do some magic for them. Don't interrupt what they're doing but if they are all set up and waiting for the guests to arrive, show them a few simple things.

They will often then mention you to the guests arriving which will help "set - up" your performances later. "Oh, you must see the magician, he's great."

The other factor about this, is that these people are often the "gate-keepers" in the office. They may not have made the actual decision to book you, but they may have done the phone around and collected quotes info etc.

The more of these people on your side, the better. If they go back to the office raving about you that's great. They will also act as a contact point if guests want to find out how to contact you or if you approach the company for a testimonial or for further work.

Five minutes of your time, perhaps before you are scheduled to start, could turn into multiple bookings.

2. I always check if they are having an official photographer. If they are, I always seek him or her out and introduce myself. Explain why you're there and ask if they would like to set up a shot with some guests early on.

Take the initiative here. Don't just let them find you later and hopefully get you with a good group.

If they don't want to set anything up, here's two ideas. Tell them what time you're leaving. Perhaps you are just doing pre dinner drinks. If they assume you are there all night, you could miss out on a great photo. Also mention what you feel is a good shot.

You know the moments that are "hot". If they're ready then the chances are increased you will get a great shot.

Getting your face in the photo records is a good strategy. The bookers and organisers may not get to see you work. At a big function you can be working your heart out, but if the right people don't see you, then they may think later it was a waste of money.

If when they go through the photo files and your face keeps popping up, this solves the problem.

Good photos get used in Company newsletters, websites, local papers etc and do lead to further work.

Also, of course, if you have got the photographers contact details, you may be able to have access to the photos. You will have to check with the company that booked you, but this is usually never a problem.

3. One thing that many beginner walk-around performers seem to feel, is that they have to be performing all the time at a function. Non stop Trick after Trick.

Don't be afraid to chat. Remember, you are there as a host entertainer. Your role is to make sure the guests have a good time.

If they want to chat, tell you a story, ask about your background, let them. If you interrupt their story about this fabulous magician they saw in their childhood just to show them your latest effect you may be missing the whole point of you being there.

(If you've listened to the Michael Ammar tape on memorable magic, he tells you to be on full alert when people are telling stories about magicians they have seen. What do they remember? What impresses the audience. This is valuable feedback)

Bonus Tip

Once you have done Tip 1, go back to the registration desk later and ask if it's OK to leave a small pile of business cards. Most events recycle name badges, people are used to returning to the Rego desk as they leave and returning their badges. A nice display of your cards next to the collection bowl can be very popular.

Two Openings

"Open Sesame"

Antoine Galland - Ali Baba & the Forty Thieves

I've been fascinated with Openings for as long as I've walked onto stages and realised the importance of that first 30 seconds. Here are a few thoughts and two of my pet openings that you can model.

My friend Ken Weber in his "must read" book Maximum Entertainment, describes your opening moments on stage "as a job interview." They sum you up in seconds, so you must be ready, confident and project a strong attitude of "It's an honor for me to be here with you" in your body and facial expression.

He also shares this excellent directors tip. Don't start talking as soon as you get in microphone range. Wait a few seconds, anchor yourself, let them focus on you and then begin.

Now, I've seen many presentations by Patricia Fripp who is one of the most respected presentation coaches in the world. Former English hairdresser and sister of legendary guitarist Robert Fripp, she now coaches highly paid speakers and corporate CEOs on effective speaking. She is a strong advocate of the punchy opening.

Don't waste valuable minutes saying "good evening Ladies and Gentlemen," then move on to express "how thrilled you are to be there" and "hope that they've all had a great day."

Get on with it! Launch into something that grabs their attention either by words, props or routine.

Here's an example from our new Palmistry Banner routine.

"I've been reliably informed, that there are several distinct personality types in this room tonight ..."

Immediately the audience is thinking ... Who told you? What are the different types? Which one am I?

They are hooked.

I used to use a similar approach when performing at Corporate Close Up functions. Breaking into a small group in a standing cocktail setting or sitting at dinner, you are invariably going to be interrupting a conversation. So, nothing timid, get in there and take control.

Here's my exact line. "Ah, there you are! I've been asked by the management to show you a miracle."

Once again there's actually quite a lot going on here. "Ah, there you are." You imply you've been searching for this particular group, they feel special, they pay attention. I usually clap my hands together as I start, to reinforce this, like the nice surprise feeling you get when you find something you've thought lost.

"I've been asked by the management" gives you credibility. You're not just a random person interrupting them or trying to pick them up. Adjust this wording to suit. If you know the name of the CEO, use that. This also puts a bit of pressure on the group. Perhaps it's true. We better pay attention. The very clever Kostya Kimlat has a similar line he teaches in his lecture.

Lastly, well who can resist seeing a miracle! As Darwin Ortiz suggests in Strong Magic, head straight into a short routine that hopefully has a climax or surprise as soon as possible.

There they are, two openings. Adjust them to suit or model what they achieve to create your own strong opening.

YouTube

"YouTube is addictive. I'm watching a magic video and the next thing you know I'm learning how to make ice cream."

"Build it and they will come." Many magicians seem to think that just by uploading a Promo Video onto YouTube, that it will instantly create a frenzy of views, increase the amount of traffic to their site and that the phone will start ringing. In truth, unless you happen to hit on a viral gimmick that really works, most magician's videos struggle to get views. But all is not lost. There are a number of simple tactics that many people overlook. These will not create a frenzy of views, but can definitely increase your traffic.

While none of my YouTube videos have ever gone viral in any way I'm pleased with the 200,000 views I've generated, the 1700 subscribers and the increased traffic to my websites. (Figures as of Jan 2017)

Here's a few things you can do right now and the good thing is, many of these simple techniques can be done long after the video was first published.

Title

What are people searching for when they look for your act? This is SEO 101, but is often overlooked in Video titles. The first few words of the Title are important. Use Analytics, a tool like Long Tail Pro or even the YouTube 'suggested search results' to get ideas on how to title your video.

Description 1

This one really is underused by many people. You are able to put a huge amount of text in the description box, so why not. Pay important attention to the first sentence or two as these will appear in many snapshot views of the video and entice people to click. Keep it relevant but Google like lots of info.

Description 2

In the description box, also include Links to your website and any other websites that you feature on. Include links to your other videos. This also adds more weight to your page and will push you up the suggested video rankings.

Tags 1

Just as a webpage can be tagged, so can your Video. Add as many relevant tags as you can. Look at what other people are doing for ideas. The free VidIQ tool can help your research. Once again don't spam the Tags.

Tags 2

If you have more than one video, add the same unique Tag to each of your videos. This could be your name. This helps link the videos and Google / YouTube will see this.

Thumbnail

YouTube suggests 3 Thumbnail images to pick from to be used as your Video Thumbnail. Often they are quite good, but you can upload your own image. Spend some time looking at what works or stands out in an array of video thumbnails. Keep it simple & bold. Canva.com is a free and easy way to make a custom thumbnail image.

Message to Subscribers

If you are lucky enough to have subscribers already, don't forget to use the message box when you publish a video. You can only use it when you first make a video Public but it is an easy way to contact subscribers.

Annotations & Cards

These also can be added to older videos to enhance the impact, correct changes and add a Call to Action. Changed your Website URL? New email address or Phone Number? Add a large Annotation box correcting the information. There are plenty of online tutorials on how to do these.

The Editor

The online Video Editor now allows plenty of changes to be made to an already published clip. You can shorten, split and enhance the video with many effects.

Shorter is Better than Longer

Google rewards videos that get watched all the way through by ranking them higher. But people tend not to watch videos all the way through, especially long ones. Taking this into account, if you are planning a new video or editing an older video, remember Shorter is probably better.

Visit our two YouTube channels by clicking the links below

MagicCoach TV

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsiRyw-9NZNZXWtLJS0hbuQ

Expert MC TV

https://www.youtube.com/user/ExpertMCTV

LinkedIn Strategies

"Facebook for Business?"

While most magicians adore Facebook, spending inordinate amounts of time building "Fan Pages," posting "selfies" with assorted big name magicians and the inevitable "here's my gig tonight" shot of an empty auditorium (and yes I've done all these things,) a growing number of magicians, especially those pursuing corporate engagements, are finding LinkedIn a much better use of their time.

While the platform is much smaller, it is made up of the people who make the decisions and write the cheques for corporate engagements. I've had great success with it over the last few years and obtained several very good clients from my time spent there.

(Note - Some of my views on LinkedIn have changed somewhat since this article was first written. I don't use it quite as much as I used to and I think some of it's original premise as a network has been diluted. However most of the tips here are still very valid and it does give you a good presence in the area you want to be found in.)

"Take the time to set up your Profile completely"

LinkedIn will guide you through the steps needed to have a complete Profile and it shows your progress to achieving that goal. The great thing is that this is not set in stone and you don't need to do it all at once. You are able to change and edit everything later, so my advice is get on with it. The more information you get in your profile the more times your listing will show up in the search results. The sooner you get started the better.

"If you ask someone to connect with you, write a short note with the request'

This is a big one. LinkedIn provides a lot of ready made templates to make it easy for you. Don't use them! If you are asking to connect with someone, immediately delete the line that reads -

"I use LinkedIn to keep track of my professional network, and would like to add you."

Write your own words or at the very least add your own words before that line. There are many people on LinkedIn who will never connect with a person who didn't bother to take a few moments to write a personal note.

A good idea is to mention when or where you met or corresponded with the person.

"Nice to meet you at the conference yesterday."
"Did you enjoy the lecture last month?"

"Spend a little time there every day

LinkedIn is not "set and forget." You need to be there and be active. You need to tweak your listing, be involved in Groups, be inviting people, making recommendations etc. All these things will be explored in more detail, but for now commit to a certain amount of time every day or at very least once a week. It could be just 5 minutes, it could be longer. I have a daily task sheet that I print out every morning when I'm working in my office. One of the Tasks is … LinkedIn.

"A simple strategy to follow every session"

Add someone, Contact someone, Comment in a group.

Every session I try and get at least one new connection, via direct connection, InMail or Introduction. I also contact someone I already have as a connection and either share something with them or interact with them in hopefully a beneficial way. Lastly I make sure I make a comment in one of the groups I am involved in.

By keeping all three areas moving ahead your connections to the community will grow.

Tip

I use a mnemonic ABC to remind me -

Add
Brief or Benefit
Comment

"Recommend rather than endorse"

One of the new features they added in the last year was the ability to "endorse" someone's work in a field of expertise. You'll get a few of these everyday and will probably send a few yourself. It's just an easy click. But a much better strategy is to take the time to actually write a short recommendation of someone's work. Not only does it strengthen the connection between you, but the recommendation will also appear on their page generating another link back to your own page.

Your contact LINKS

On your Profile page by following the Contact Info tab you can place links to your own Websites. Take a few minutes to change the default "Company Website" text link to something a bit more compelling. It's a good place to use your Keyword again and I believe this will also help in your own site SEO.

"Export to PDF"

This is a very useful tool which can be found on your profile page. Not only can you turn your own page into a PDF and send it to someone else, you can grab other profile pages to build up a prospects list.

"Upgrade to paid"

Consider upgrading to a paid account!

The Profile Folders, Open Link and other features may well be worth the small monthly cost. But, I would wait until you have a Profile you like and are comfortable using the Platform on a regular basis. To get benefit from the additional features you have to use them, they don't just automatically help you.

"Let people know they can find you on Linked In"

Once you are set up - website, printed material, mention it during conversations and presentation

Got Talent?

"The TV business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs. There's also a negative side."
Hunter S Thompson

The one and only time I went on a televised talent show, I got beaten by a man in a wheelchair singing "My Way," so understandably I have some bias against them . This year however, several of my friends decided to enter Australia's Got Talent, so I paid a bit more attention to the competition. Once again the producers had actively sought out professional magic acts to fill out the show and several featured strongly in the final on- air series. (Many also auditioned with varying success.) My colleague Raymond Crowe made it right through to the Grand Final and I asked him to share his Ten Little Secrets for anyone thinking of entering in the future. I've added some comments to his thoughts.

"The Art and Artifice of Competitive Magic"

Assemble a team of trusted advisors

I've talked about this many times on MagicCoach.com. Ray has always pulled in a talented team of outside directors, collaborators, writers etc to enhance what he does, be it stage shows, video projects or television. It pays off big time. Ray credits - David Regal, Doug Tremlett, Ross Skiffington and many others for helping him get through to the Grand Final.

Decide where you want to be in the competition

Be clear on your goals. Do you want to win the money, get a good professional show reel, get publicity, raise your profile, get industry contacts or get experience? They are not all the same objective. The clearer you are on your goals, the more you will gain from your time and effort being there.

It's not about you… it's about them.

By this Ray means the Show... (the Producers , The Brand , the Network.) Never forget that!

Never look at Facebook

Two sides to this comment. I saw many negative comments on FB about various acts and subsequently observed some performers who were very upset about the reaction to their segments. I also saw several performers who were very active in the social media channels, engaging with everyone who commented and building their fan base by doing so. Have a Social Media plan and stick to it and if you are the type who gets upset with negative reviews don't read them.

Try to do their job as much as possible

The easier you are to work with the better. Be prepared and be accommodating and it will pay off for you during the process. You will get treated better.

Stand Your Ground

The flip side is that you must also stand your ground on the elements that are important to you in achieving the goal you set for yourself.

Don’t lie or concoct a story

The pressure is on to be "interesting," to create a "back-story" that they can use as fill and pad out the segments. Be very wary of expanding on the truth, you will get caught out.

Be prepared to get material stolen.

Routines are almost immediately uploaded onto YouTube for the entire world to see and study. There are many people who think it's then fine to plunder the intellectual property of others once they have appeared on TV. The same old excuses get trotted out year after year. Sadly, there is not much that can be done about it, but peer pressure can and should be applied by us all.

Don’t do it

That, was my comment not Ray's. I think if you are very clear about why you are going in, have more to gain than lose, have a bulletproof, commercial & unique act, have a very thick skin, can put up with all the shenanigans and backstabbing, come across well on TV, then go for it. For the rest of us let's just sit back and support them.

The Magic Cafe's Missing Manual

"Look here Waiter, if this is coffee, I want tea; but if this is tea, then I wish for coffee." Punch, 1902

Love it or hate it, The Magic Cafe appeared on the scene at just the right time. A resurgence of interest in Magic, more powerful Forum software and more widespread usage of computers in the general population came together to give us ... the behemoth often called "the green place."

The place is packed with giant egos, bluff, bravado, name calling, cat fights and general bitterness. It's design and functionality is stuck 15 years behind the times and it's sometimes apparently arbitrary decisions on behalf of the administrators drive many to despair and abandonment.

Which is a pity, because it also has some great people, fantastic treasures buried away in long threads waiting to be discovered, sage advice from experts & working pros and even visits from assorted magical celebrities, sometimes in disguise. It's also so vast that as your interests change and develop within the craft you will find new corners and new communities to explore.

Yes, there is a FAQ and other How To information scattered around the sprawling site, but here's our brief guide for getting the most of your time there.

Use your real name.

Go on, I dare you. If you want your comments to be taken seriously or your questions to be answered fully, best practice is not to hide behind an avatar and a pseudonym. If you already have your name and account set up, you can always ask the administrators to change it. There may be a few reasons to use a screen name, but in general I think being upfront is the best approach.

Put up a Signature File

It's not that complicated to put a signature and active link back to your website if you have one. Not only is this a source of traffic, it's a valuable SEO bonus coming from a large authority site and it also gives people a bit more context when they read your questions and comments.

Don't get Obsessed by the Closed Forums

Newcomers to the Cafe, often obsess with the perceived treasures hidden behind the locked walls of the closed forums. The 50 Post restrictions to entry is often taken on like a personal challenge and a flurry of short posts are dropped around to crank up the total. Don't do it. You'll quickly develop the wrong sort of reputation; it's just not worth it.

Someone is wrong on the Internet

Randall Munroe famously encapsulated the whole Forum experiences hilariously in his one frame comic Duty Calls, published in xkcd.com. The off scene voice asks the person viewed typing away on his computer - "Are you coming to bed yet?" The reply .." Not yet, this is important"..."What?" .... "Someone is wrong on the internet."

You don't need to correct every mistake you see or attack every position you don't agree with. It's just not possible.

The "search" function

The search function has been a bone of contention at the cafe for many years. Some saw it as a prime example of the inflexibility of the administrators, others as a limitation of the hardware and software. There was a major upgrade last year that has improved things but it's still not best practice when you look at many other large forum sites.

A work around that many use is entering this phrase into Google.

site:themagiccafe.com cups and balls

(Obviously you replace "cups and balls" with your search criteria.)

Background Checks

It's always good to have a quick peek at someone's website or background, especially if they are loudly spouting forth advice on web design, search engine optimization or the best way to do a Diagonal Palm Shift. It's often quite revealing.

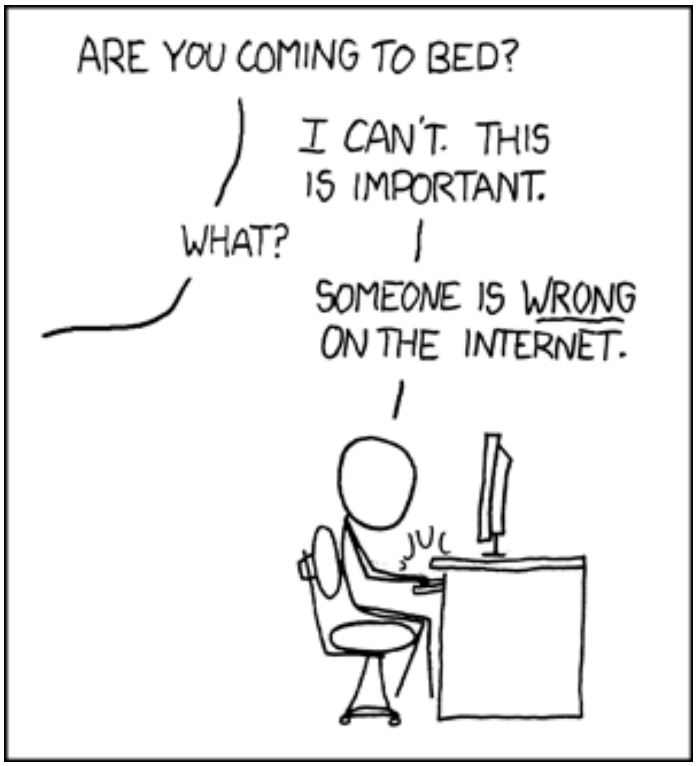
Reviews

Take most product reviews you read on the Cafe with a large grain of salt. Many are written by authors themselves under different names or with the collaboration of friends.

A good strategy is to seek out people you know or trust in the area you are interested in and watch out for their comments about particular things. Or send them a PM (Private message) and ask their opinion.

Magicians helping Magicians

The famous quotation at the top of the Cafe doorway is often mocked, but the sentiment is a good one. Zig Zigler often said - "You will get everything you want in life if you just help other people get what they want."



http://xkcd.com/386/

Travel

"With an act like mine it pays to keep moving!"

With the exception of a lucky few, most magicians need to travel to work. Be it across town, across the State or Overseas, we are often on the move. Here are some secrets to smoothing the trips.

Use the time

Podcasts, audio books, catch up reading, writing, brainstorming, post show review etc are all valuable ways to make use of time stuck in transit.

However you also need to balance this with some switch off time. Try and have a plan for your time stuck on the plane or train that is a mix of both.

Learn to Pack

Are you a one bagger?

Travel Expert & Mentalist Doug Dyment's excellent http://www.onebag.com is a terrific site with bucket loads of information. Even if you don't take up the practice of One Bag, you are guaranteed to come away with tips on efficient packing, an understanding of effective luggage and a whole lot more.

Eat Well

By this I mean two things. It's sometimes hard to stick to healthy foods on the road - hotels, room service, truck stops etc. At the very least pack some healthy snacks for when you are pressed for time or relaxing post gig.

But likewise, make sure you explore the local cuisine whenever possible. I love to explore and eat - Chowhound.com, Yelp.com & the food sections of FlyerTalk.com have all provided great tips and suggestions.

Sleep on the other side

And I think it was Max Maven who offered this insightful tip for hotels and motels. Always sleep on the side of the bed away from the phone. It's usually much more comfortable.

Join the Club

The sooner you start collecting Airline or Hotel points the better.

But start channelling all your travel through just one or two brands. Add your preferred airline to your proposals and contracts. Points accrued can then be used for upgrades & extra travel thus reducing your costs.

Some airline rewards tiers are easier/cheaper to maintain than acquire in the first instance. So, it may be worth spending a little cash to get to the next level. The famous Mileage Run.

For instance the first year I got to Gold on my preferred airline, Qantas, I spent a bit extra to get it. But the extras provided each year since then, free club membership, priority boarding, extra bag allowance etc, easily make up for that money spent and the points required to maintain the level are much less.

Understand the System

Learn how the system works. Sites like FlyerTalk.com, SeatGuru.com provide a wealth of info and insider tips on travel programs, destinations and how to work the ever changing system.

Use the Tools

The internet has provided a raft of tools to ease the pain. Tripit.com is a must for frequent flyers storing all details and updates of travel. Waze.com is a fast growing community of road warriors, continually updating travel times, accidents, speed traps etc. Uber.com is a fast growing disruptive innovation in the Taxi industry. Kayak.com a one stop source of cheap travel.

Gadgets

Magicians all love shiny new things, but as Nick Lewin pointed out recently in a piece, packing your sparkly new pair of Bose Headphones in your carryon probably means you have to leave out a prop that might save the day if your checked baggage doesn't show.

One approach is to aim for things that have multiple uses, either in your show or in your travel logistics.

Illusions

"If we choose, we can live in the world of comforting illusion."
Noam Chomsky

Now it may come as a surprise to people who know my current work as a mentalist and corporate MC, but for over 20 years Illusions were the core of my business. Lynda and I were the first Illusionists to sign a long term contract at the Southern Hemisphere's largest theme park, (2 years at Australia's Wonderland), extensive contracts for Warner Brothers & Sega World and a seemingly endless stream of corporate events ranging from Product Launches, Gala Balls and Conventions. But as a wise magician once told me … "those boxes are sure going to get heavy and there will always be a young dude snapping at your heels." Perhaps that young dude is you!

Here are a few thoughts on why you should consider adding some illusions to your repertoire and if do decide to take the plunge, some things to consider.

Instant Fee Rise

Adding an illusion to your repertoire allows you to charge more. As I pointed out in the very first part of this series, most magicians don't charge what they should or could. There are many reasons for this, some are just mindset. Having a perceived "bigger show" is one quick way past that mental block.

Increased PR Opportunities

Looking to get a story in a news channel, either print, TV or online?

Having an interesting large prop that could be involved is a hook that often gets their attention.

Props like a head chopper or guillotine where you can be seen interacting with a celebrity or local identity are also perfect for a quick photo opportunity that the press love.

Be aware though that many illusions only work well as live performance pieces. On stage you often have movement, lighting, staging, storyline and blocking helping provide misdirection. Often a still shot of an illusion reveals more than you want. "Interlude" is an example of this. Widely used as a promotion shot by illusionists but often the still photo is terribly revealing.

Create Interest

Nothing creates interest like a mysterious large odd shaped object covered up in theatrical drapes.

This is perfect for creating a bit of pre show interest and building audiences in venues like shopping centres, fairs and festival shows, where people may be passing your performance space before the actual show starts.

Likewise during the show, an illusion, draped or not, is often sitting there, keeping interest up. They can also be used to "frame" a stage, cover some sight angles, hide props behind etc.

Performed to Music

Many illusions can be performed entirely to music and others with just some slight verbal setup.

Having several pieces in your show able to be performed to music has many commercial advantages.

Language problems can be overcome, broadening the markets you are able to work in. Noisy spaces can be worked successfully. And if you are booked into a dreadful corporate event where the audience is just interested in themselves and drinking, you can still perform at full energy and volume, delivering a satisfying show, at least to you.

Be Contrarian

Interest in performing Illusion shows seem to have a cycle in popularity.

Perhaps now is a good time, with most young magicians so preoccupied with "cardistry," hassling complete strangers with "street magic" or becoming the next teenage "psychological illusionist."

Pick Illusions that are Flexible

It's fabulous browsing the web catalogues of illusion design and seeing all the possibilities, but the commercial reality for most performers is an ever changing variety of performing conditions.

An illusion that can be performed “anywhere” is always going to be more valuable to you than one that has sightline or lighting issues.

I was lucky enough to have dinner one night with the Master illusionist Jonathan Pendragon. We discussed his ideas on this. He wrote a terrific article in an early Genii magazine that reinforced that point, suggesting both Sword Basket & Broom Suspension as ideal first illusions, for that reason amongst others

It doesn't have to be expensive

You don't have to spend thousands of dollars at the beginning to see if an illusion fits into your show. Or if you can fit into an illusion.

There are many Do It Yourself plans available. The number one selling ebook on Lybrary.com is Grant's Illusion Secrets, closely followed by his Victory Carton Illusions book. Those two will set you back $12 for the pair.

It doesn't have to be cheap

Once you are comfortable that an illusion is right for you, be prepared to spend the money to get a good version.

Yes, professional reputable builders are expensive, but you get what you pay for and they will last longer, look great, have fewer malfunctions and will have a greater resale value.

We had the pleasure of owning a Bill Smith Magic Ventures illusion for a number of years and loved the quality of the work that went into it.

History & Literature

There is a rich history of illusions ready to be used as inspiration. You don't have to be doing your effect the same as everyone else. Delve into the past to see plot lines, costuming, themes, equipment etc.

Remember our SCAMPER technique from the Creativity issue? Once you see something that interests you, ask yourself ... What can you - Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Other Use, Eliminate or Rearrange?

Have an Act first

Now I've convinced you that you should include an illusion or two, one final piece of advice.

I always recommend to people that they concentrate on having an act first and then explore the possibilities of illusions.

If you can't command, entertain and hold the attention of an audience anyway, adding some illusions probably isn't going to help.

Heckling

"I do actually have a list of wise cracks for clever hecklers, but I'm afraid you Sir, don't qualify!"

Getting heckled during a live performance is something we all have to face at some point. Six year olds at a birthday party, young dudes at a comedy club and cynical corporate types at a dinner can all feel the need to "add" to your performance.

Many years ago in MagicCoach we published a terrific article by Stan Davis, looking at children aged from 4-7 and the reasons they heckle. This can be found in the MagicCoach100 eBook and on the website. I'll stick to the adults this time with some tips suitable for Comedy Clubs and Corporate.

As some background, I spent many years working the booming Stand Up scene of the early '80's, at the established comedy clubs and touring the country with various headline acts of the day . This was a set of guidelines I always tried to follow.

Firstly, determine if the comments are nasty or not. Are they “with you or agin you?”

If the comment is good natured banter then the worst thing you can do is come back with an inappropriate “line”. You can lose more friends than you gain.

If a line is funny, tell them so and move on, retaining the flow and momentum. You use that energy and byplay to build.

If it’s nasty, I never acknowledge or respond straight away.

Darwin Ortiz summed it up nicely in Strong Magic. “When you respond to an interruption, you are giving them permission to interrupt again”.

The first thing to remember is that maybe only a small percentage of the audience heard the remark anyway. And you have the power. If it is heard by all, then you have to sense the feeling in the room. If this person is in a minority then just continue on. If they persist and the majority is still on your side then your position is getting stronger. When people in the audience start looking at the heckler or telling them to shut up, then is your moment. Then if you deliver a line, choose one that talks to the whole audience rather than the heckler. They know who you are talking about.

What about the situation where it seems the whole room is against you?

When you start sweating from places you never know you could!

Glance around the room and find the one person who seems to be enjoying it. Or hating it less than everyone else. They are your key. Work on them. Charm them and win them completely over. Then, the person on each side of them. Then their table. Their corner of the room, etc. A hostile room can be conquered one by one, or at least enough for you to do your time and complete your job.

The heckler is like a river. They can't really be stopped. You can change the direction, shape it and sometimes control it, but never stop it completely. When you acknowledge this fact, you can apply it to your performance and how you deal with hecklers. Like the ju-jitsu warrior, you use the energy and momentum by deflection. Turn it to your advantage.

To finish, here are a 6 fairly mild lines that might be useful in your repertoire. A larger collection can be found in The Secret Notebook of Mr Hyde Vol 1 or The Expert MC's Toolkit.

I see we've broken up into small discussion groups

Has your mouth got a pause button?

My act is usually better, but then I usually work alone.

You have the right to remain silent

He's not a complete Idiot, some parts are missing

Thanks for your thoughts.. but we do things a little differently on Earth.

Merchandising

"And if you buy in the next 15 minutes I'll throw in a flashing thumb at no extra cost"

Merchandising is a well-used revenue stream in all forms of the entertainment industry and one that is explored by many magicians. For some, the piles of extra money at their shows is “icing on the cake” but for many it also allows them to accept, at times, lower paying gigs, as they know they will easily recoup any difference from cash sales at the Back of the Room. (BOR)

But there are several other important reasons why magicians should consider some form of Merchandising.

These include - Prestige, Marketing, Publicity and more.

We recently updated our very first eBook – Multiply Your Merchandising, which at the time of publishing this book is available for free off our website at http://www.Magiccoach.com

Here are a few of the reasons WHY you should do some Merchandising and a few of the ACTIONS that you can take immediately to Multiply your sales. You can read the rest and the collection of great resources in the book.

4 Reasons Why you should do some Merchandising

1. You will always have an appropriate gift for clients, volunteers and participants which is self-funded by sales. Once you have covered the initial setup costs not only will you make money by selling the items, you will save money on the items you give away. And the more you do it the cheaper the cost per item will be

2. Having some good merchandise adds to your prestige before, during and after the show. e.g. “he’s got a Book! He must be good.”

3. It adds to your promotion and name recognition. People who have your DVD or Magic Kit will be able to find you via the contact information included.

4. Don't just get their money, get their details! It can drive people to your Social Media Channels, Likes to your Facebook Page and subscribers to your twitter feed or Newsletter. Offer a free eBook, a Fan Club etc. This can be as simple as a clipboard or more advanced like SignUpAnywhere.com & OnSpotSocial.com on an iPad or tablet.

5 Actions to Increase Sales

Call it an autograph table

Calling it an autograph table facilitates the interaction between you and your fans, allowing photos, autographs and extra sales.

A Roll Up banner with your Social Media contact points is of course a great backdrop for the photos.

(See the fantastic script from Ed Fowler in the Multiply Your Merchandising book, for an excellent “soft sell.”)

Share the Profits

Sharing the profits of your merchandising table is imposed by some clients, bookers and venues. But it can also be used to make more money at appropriate venues.

Offer to split the profits with an organiser or to donate a set amount per sale to their fundraising charity.

Once this is announced people feel obliged to buy as they are helping the event. It is a win win.

Be very aware though of your exact costs when doing something like this, but also balance up the economies of scale.

If you know you can move many more units, the price per unit really starts to drop when you order.

The price for each item when buying 2000 of something is a lot different than if you just ordered 500.

This extra profit margin then relates to all your shows, not just the ones where you do a deal.

Don’t play fancy games with pricing!

Have a good think about what the typical person has in their wallet.

You don’t have time for fancy supermarket “price points” like $4.99

Handle with care

Treat your products with care.

They are valuable things. Not only in the physical sense, there’s no use in damaging and wasting stock, but more importantly in the eyes of the audience. The perceived value is important.

If the audience sees you throw them around, drop them on the table and generally be dismissive of the items, that will be their perception too.

Display them well, handle them gently, show them with pride.

Timing is Vital

Make sure there is a break straight after your show for people to meet and buy from you.

If Santa arrives straight after the show or lunch is served in another room, your opportunity can be lost.

This is especially important if you are relying on the sales to boost your take home amount, perhaps after accepting a smaller fee to lock in an assignment. Check the scheduling when you negotiate the job and then when you arrive on the day.

Action

For another 30 ideas, resources, links and HOW you can easily put something together, grab a copy of the full eBook off the MagicCoach.com website.

Conventions

"Some Un-Conventional Thinking"

I love Magic Conventions. They give us a real chance to mix and mingle with fellow pros and enthusiasts, see some great shows, learn from the experts and of course get hands on with the latest shiny new products.

I can't even guess how many I've attended around the world over the years. I go to less now than I used to, my work schedule often clashes with the big ones, but I'm hoping to get back into the swing over the next few years and start presenting my own lecture more. Here are a few ideas on how to get more out of them.

Go with a plan

I always try and go to Magic Conventions with a bit of a plan.

For a magic enthusiast, attending a convention is a bit of a "no brainer." But as a professional, the cost of attending plus the lost work opportunities over the period must be balanced out. You must get some good ROI. Something I've always tried to do is to focus on one particular "theme" and see what relates to it over the course of the event.

For instance, go in looking at "openings" or "transitions" or “applause cues.” Then in all the shows and lectures, see how people address this.

This can also work for the dealer displays. You are then not just fixated on the hot new products, it forces you to think if that particular effect, prop or technique might fit a particular need in your act.

Likewise, think about who you would like to meet, session with etc. Social Media has made it much easier to see who will be at an event and make contact before and during the event.

Make Notes

As a follow up to the first tactic, make notes as you go.

I love going back over my old notebooks from each of my visits to USA Conventions. List of performers, notes on effects in the shows, lecture thoughts, ideas, websites and book titles people mention etc.

If you buy a similar notebook for each event they quickly build into a fantastic resource that you can go back to over and over.

Book Early

If you want people to keep organising conventions, then show your support and book early. Some large events like FISM & Magic Live reward people who book early with better seating. But importantly, it also helps smaller events with their planning and cash flow. Events that book up quickly are sometimes able to spend more on the event than they originally planned. They may be able to add extra or better events, add guests, provide more catering etc.

Help Out

Going to an event?

Offer to help in any way you can. There is always a need for backstage helpers, ticket takers, runners, meet and greet for international guests etc.

Spending extra time with the guest lecturers or being backstage at major convention shows is a highlight for many.

Don't be “that” person

There's always one at every convention or magic club lecture.

They can usually be spotted asking inane questions to lecturers that could easily be asked elsewhere. Or taking up precious lecture time by commenting on how "they" would do it etc.

Don't be that person.

Be Aware

Magic must be one of the few professions where people feel that just because they “do magic" too, at whatever level, that everyone is equal. It's not the case.

Be ready

I loved the approach that one big name card guy had when he attended conventions. If he was asked for advice or engaged in conversation he always asked them to show him a trick. He could then gauge the experience level of the person and respond at the appropriate level. Be ready.

Go to FISM

While I’m NOT a big fan of competitive magic, I urge every magician, especially professionals, to attend FISM at least once.

In addition to the competitions there is a huge range of lectures and shows that will expose you to a wider world of magical performance that you may not experience at other events.

As you might have already figured from my previous comments, I love watching show structures, use of music, applause cues etc. Watch the South American artists, the Koreans and the Eastern Europeans and you'll see a myriad of different, strong approaches to the different elements of our acts.

Be part of the solution

Amongst all the good times and bonhomie at most Magic Conventions there are also several disturbing dark threads.
Firstly, pilfering from dealer stands and display tables is rife, as recently highlighted at the Blackpool event. If you see activity like this going on, do something about it.
Secondly, magic is still very much a "Boys Club." Despite the many wonderful women that have made their mark on the industry, they are still very much in the minority. More can be done by everyone to support and change attitudes.
Thirdly, predatory behaviour towards young magicians is still unfortunately a curse on the industry. It happens at conventions as much as it does at magic clubs. Many people are aware but little is done. We can all do something about this.

Synchronicity

Despite all my talk of making plans, keeping notes and not getting distracted; remember to also "Go with the Flow."

Be open, be considerate, be an audience, have fun and be ready for adventure.

I've made several lifelong friends at conventions, I hope to make several more.

Podcast Round Up

As the old saying goes, I've been in show business for over 40 years and at least 30 of those years were spent waiting backstage or in travelling. It's little wonder then that magicians are both big consumers of Podcasts and producers of them.

We've been producing magical audio updates and interviews in various forms since we learnt to connect our computers together and with the advent of newer simpler technologies, it's been far easier for anyone to get into the game and become their own broadcaster.

However, it's a different matter to build an audience and continue producing quality content on a regular basis. The initial enthusiasm often wanes, time between episodes lengthens and finally they fail to proceed.

Often people just underestimate the actual time involved. I asked prolific podcaster Scott Wells how long he thought he spent on each of his 1 hour episodes? His answer, 6-8 additional hours after the actual recording. That's editing, uploading, adding music etc.

Regularity of broadcast is another aspect often overlooked. Listeners like and lookout for a regular schedule, be it weekly or monthly, or even daily as Scott does in his epic Convention episodes. A recent trend in podcasting has been to produce seasons, giving the producer time off to recharge and evaluate.

The short list of Podcast below is by no means a comprehensive list. I've included a couple of blockbusters, a couple of lesser known ones and a few from the archives that are still available in various forms. If I left off your podcast or your favourite one, don't take it personally .

The Magicians Podcast - Richard Young

http://magicianspodcast.podbean.com/

With a strong UK emphasis this series has featured many big names sharing terrific insights. It's a favourite of many and is highly recommended.

The Magic Word - Scott Wells -

http://themagicwordpodcast.com/

Prolific broadcaster Scott seems to know just about every magician worth knowing and attends most big conventions. If you can't attend a particular Convention, his day by day reporting eases the pain somewhat.

The Magic Newswire - Dodd Vickers -

http://magicnews.libsyn.com/

Another treasure trove of hundreds of episodes. Been a while since the last one.

Magic State of Mind - Peter Wardell -

http://magicstateofmind.com/

Excellent range of interviews. Peter isn't actively producing these anymore, but they are well worth checking out. You'll even find me there somewhere.

Stories from The Pitch - David Aiken -

http://buskerhalloffame.com/

Busking and street performer stories from around the globe. Always fascinating.

Gingerosity - Daniel GreenWolf -

http://www.thegingerosity.com/

An eclectic mix of - street, carnival, burlesque, sideshow and more

Kid's Entertainers Hub - Ken Kelly and Julian Mather -

http://kidsentertainerhub.com/

Regular tips, advice & insights into the world of Children's Entertainment

SECTION 4 Resources

The Resource page for this book is hosted on the MagicCoach website and can be accessed via the link below. This allows us to update it on a regular basis so you always get the current list.

http://www.magiccoach.com/Resources200/

Items Listed include

Our Tech Stack

All the Tools that we use to run our Business.

Web Hosting

Automation/ Mail Program

CRM

Themes

Shopping Cart

Collaboration / Cloud

Video

Design Resources

Training

Books and other Resources

Productivity / Goal Setting

Memory

SWOT Techniques

Impact Ease Grid Technique

....and more